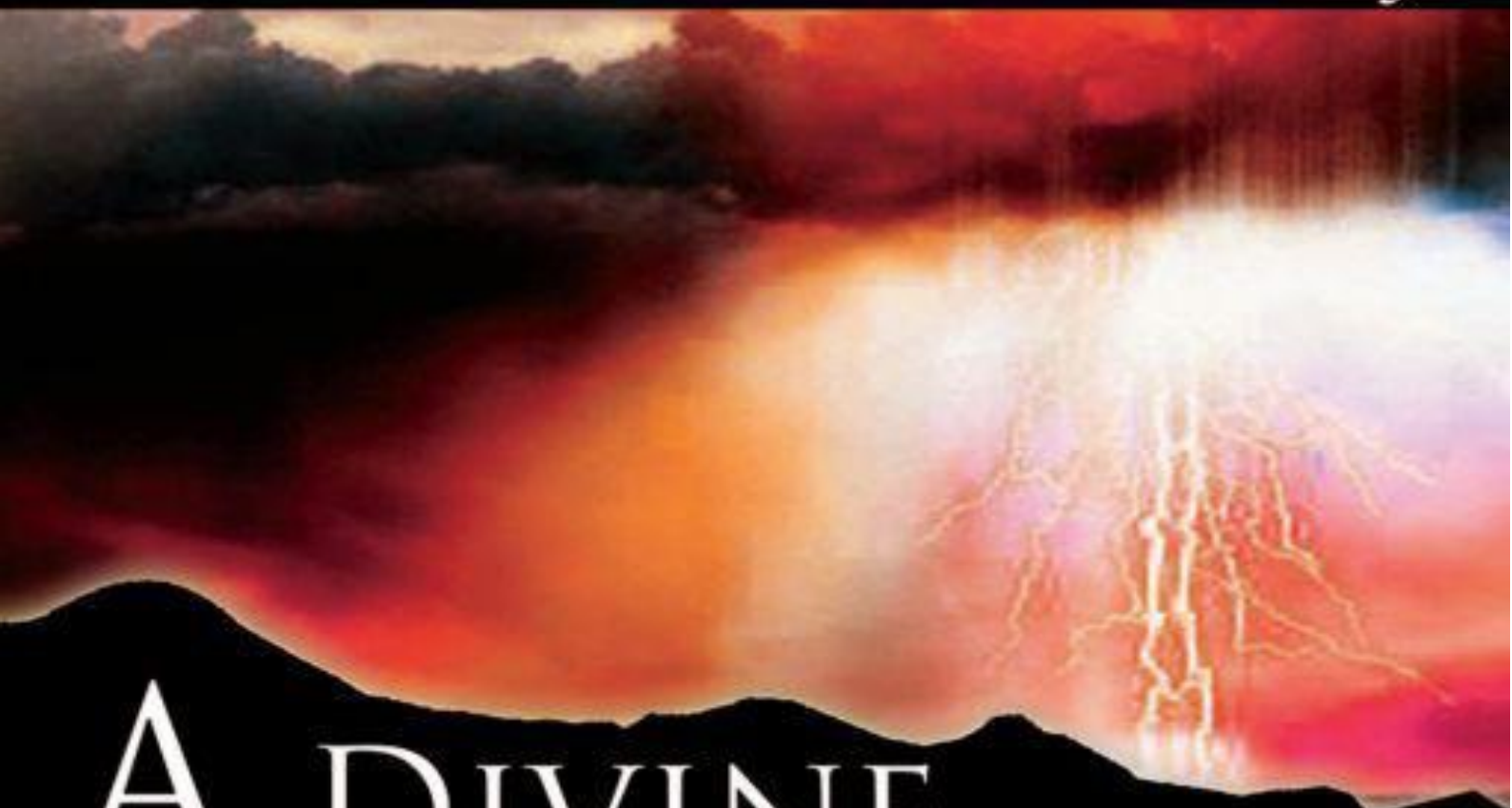
MARY K. BAXTER

and Dr. T. L. Lowery



A DIVINE REVELATION *of* SPIRITUAL WARFARE

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"*A Divine Revelation of Spiritual Warfare* is just the tool for every believer seeking to recognize the enemy, face him head on, and declare victory over his wiles once and for all! You need this book in your spiritual arsenal!"

—***Paula White***

Paula White Ministries/Without Walls International Church

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to
The Father,
The Son,
and The Holy Spirit.

MARY K. BAXTER
and Dr. T. L. Lowery

A DIVINE REVELATION of SPIRITUAL WARFARE

WHITAKER HOUSE

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

BY MARY K. BAXTER

I am a veteran of spiritual warfare. I have engaged the enemy on many battlefields of the world, the flesh, and the devil. This book tells how God revealed to me the secrets of defeating Satan and his legions of evil spirits. It is about the existence of evil in the invisible realm—the effects of which we confront in our daily lives—and of overcoming that evil. God has promised,

> *Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.*
>
> *(Psalm 91:9-11)*

I want to thank my coauthor, the Reverend Dr. T. L. Lowery, for his invaluable assistance. He has been a mentor and spiritual advisor to me, and I thank God for him. Without his assistance, prayers, and help, this book would not and could not have been written. I honor him and his beautiful wife, Mildred, for their support and encouragement to me in this ministry.

I sincerely thank my church, the National Church of God in Washington, D.C., and my pastor, the Reverend Stephen Lowery, for their support and encouragement.

I gratefully recognize and credit those at Whitaker House who have been so instrumental in making these messages from God available to

the reading public.

Most of all, I am grateful to God, who has called me to share these messages. I give all praise and honor and glory to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

—Mary K. Baxter

INTRODUCTION

BY DR. T. L. LOWERY

In the spiritual realm, pitched battles are occurring day and night—battles that affect the human situation on a very real level. Although these battles are unobserved by human eyes and unreported on the daily newscasts, believing men and women are grappling with sinister forces as they *"fight the good fight of faith"* (1 Timothy 6:12).

I believe Jesus was referring to spiritual warfare when He said, *"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword"* (Matthew 10:34). As long as there are evils to overcome and injustices to fight, as long as the ungodly rage and the undisciplined ignore the laws of God, spiritual warfare will continue to be a chilling reality.

The cosmic battles between the righteous forces of God and the demonic forces of evil play out continually in a thousand different ways. Some of these battles are small—local conflicts, by comparison—while others are gigantic, affecting nations and impacting movements of history.

God is leading us toward the climax of human history and the return of Jesus Christ, while Satan, our enemy, is trying to prevent God's purposes from being fulfilled. Spiritual warfare is therefore an essential aspect of our Christian walk, yet many Christians are uncertain about how they can and should participate in spiritual battles. They need to know what the Bible says about the nature of this warfare and how we are to wage it.

Mary K. Baxter and I have collaborated in the writing of this book,

which we pray will demonstrate and teach these vital biblical principles. We have diligently searched the Scriptures, and we present this material with the assurance that its teaching is backed up by the Word of God. In addition to Mary's descriptions of what God has revealed to her biblically about the spiritual realm, we have included her testimonies as well as the testimonies of others who have fought spiritual battles with the forces of evil and have come out victorious.

In this book, we have endeavored to describe the equipment needed for victory in this war, making it clear that God and righteousness will emerge as the ultimate winners.

The other books that Mary and I have written have already blessed millions of people in many countries. The wide acceptance of these writings and the enthusiastic feedback from people whose lives have been changed by reading them is gratifying, indeed.

My prayer for you is that God will bless you and keep you. May He cause His face to shine on you, and may He bless you in everything you do. I pray that God will give you a fresh anointing and abundant fruitfulness.

—Dr. T. L. Lowery

PART ONE:

THE EXISTENCE OF EVIL

CHAPTER 1

HISTORY'S MOST CRUCIAL CONFLICT

For we do not wrestle against f lesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

—Ephesians 6:12

Every human being is involved in a war that will ultimately end all wars. It is *spiritual* warfare, and it is much more critical than a battle between powerful countries with nuclear armaments. It is more evil than a terrorist plot and more dangerous than a ticking time bomb. In fact, the war being waged in the spiritual realm is more devastating than all the battles of all the nations throughout history.

Our enemy seeks to conquer and destroy the *souls*, *spirits*, and *bodies* of human beings.

This spiritual war is not like earthly warfare, although earthly wars may be part of it. Our warfare is in the realm of the supernatural. Although they are invisible to human eyes, our enemy and his opposition are real. The conflict is taking place between the forces and powers of God and the lesser forces and powers of Satan. These are battles between good and evil, right and wrong, between the power that builds up and the power that destroys.

Human beings are right in the middle of this conflict. We are the

treasure that is being fought over because we are the crown of God the Father's creation, made in His own image. Yet we are also foot soldiers in the fight. We must understand the nature of this war and learn how to fight effectively because many lives—including our own—are at stake.

We MUST LEARN HOW TO FIGHT EFFECTIVELY BECAUSE MANY LIVES—INCLUDING OUR OWN—ARE AT STAKE.

Considering the cataclysmic conflict we are involved in, it is not surprising that the Bible metaphorically compares the Christian life to warfare. For example, Timothy was encouraged by his mentor, the apostle Paul, to *"fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life"* (1 Timothy 6:12), and to *"endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ"* (2 Timothy 2:3). Paul also exhorted other believers to *"put on the armor of light"* (Romans 13:12), and to *"put on the whole armor of God"* (Ephesians 6:11).

THREE COSTLY ERRORS

Although a war is being fought against them in the spiritual realm, most people are not really aware of their covert enemy, Satan. A recent survey revealed that nearly seventy percent of the American public believes Satan is real. However, this statistic doesn't reflect the average person's appalling lack of knowledge about his true nature or activities. Many in our society have some idea of Satan, or the devil, but their understanding of him is confused and distorted because they have bought into popular images of the devil. For example, they may see him as a jokester who goes around tempting people to do mischievous things. They don't see the devil for the malicious being he really is.

The widespread ignorance and confusion regarding Satan reflects three major—and costly—errors in most people's approach to the spiritual realm and spiritual warfare.

Denying the Existence of Evil Forces

The first error people make is to deny the existence of evil spirits and the spiritual world in general. Some people think that Satan and his demons are like Santa Claus and his elves—mere figments of childish imaginations. They do not understand that much evil in our world is the work of Satan; instead, they choose to believe that bad things happen only by accidents of nature, or that people do evil things because of poor socialization.

The Bible tell us beyond a shadow of a doubt, however, that the spiritual world is real, and that there are evil as well as good spiritual forces. The apostle Paul identified these evil forces as *"principalities," "powers," "rulers of the darkness of this age,"* and *"spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places"* (Ephesians 6:12).

The existence of our spiritual enemy, Satan, is an undeniable fact. Jesus Himself called Satan the *"ruler of this world"* (John 12:31). He referred to the devil as the enemy, as in Matthew 13:39: *"The enemy who sowed* [tares, or weeds] *is the devil."* In 1 Peter 5:8, the Bible calls Satan *"your adversary the devil."*

The wickedness of the visible world is influenced, fueled, and powered by the spiritual underworld, which is populated by Satan and other fallen spirit beings. As we grapple with the reality of evil, we must be aware of the fact that evil spirits influence things that happen in our everyday lives. Everything that is good and righteous is being attacked by the devil and his forces.

When SATAN CAN DISTRACT US FROM THE REALITY OF THE SUPERNATURAL REALM, HE CAN DIVERT US FROM FINDING SPIRITUAL SOLUTIONS FOR CRITICAL ISSUES.

Spiritual struggle, or the conflict of the human spirit with evil spirits, is not a myth but a sobering and sometimes frightening reality. In my travels, I have seen many wounded souls walking around, not realizing that intense spiritual warfare is being waged against them. You know you are in a physical battle when you get shot or you see someone else bleeding from being shot. I have been "shot at" and I have been "wounded." I know the reality of spiritual warfare.

Satan's job is to get us to ignore the spiritual realm or give it low priority. If he can distract us from the reality of the supernatural realm, he can divert us from finding spiritual solutions for critical issues in the world and in our own lives.

Attributing to Satan Everything That Goes Wrong

A second error is attributing to the devil *every* negative action or situation that takes place in the world. We must be cautious not to give Satan undue attention by excessive thinking and studying about him. This approach often leads to a fascination, fearfulness, and overestimation of his power. It can even lead people to inadvertently engage in a form of satanic worship by attributing to him qualities that belong only to God, such as omniscience (being all knowing), omnipresence (being everywhere at once), and omnipotence (being all powerful). People end up living in fear of Satan rather than with trust in God.

It is true that the devil does everything he can to destroy and deceive. He is not some impersonal benign influence; he is a real spirit being, and he is at war with us. However, not all bad things come directly from him.

Sickness, for example, may sometimes be caused by an evil spirit, but not always. While satanic attack is a possible cause of sickness, as the book of Job indicates, sickness does not necessarily come from the devil. Jesus clearly distinguished between the healing of sickness and the casting out of demons. When sickness is caused by willful sin or natural causes, then attempting to cast out demons will not bring about healing.

Being exposed to a virus is not the same thing as being demon-possessed. If you break your arm in an accidental fall, you don't necessarily have a demon in your arm. Some things come our way

simply because we live in a fallen world. Tragic things happen to both the righteous and the unrighteous. It will continue to be this way until Jesus returns, when *"there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things* [will] *have passed away"* (Revelation 21:4).

Believing that Christians Are Immune from Satanic Attack

Third, some Christians think that believers are immune to demonic assault. Many Scriptures prove that this is not so. For example, consider the experience of Jesus' temptation by the devil (see Matthew 4:1-10; Luke 4:1-13), and of Paul's harassment by a *"spirit of divination,"* which possessed a servant girl (see Acts 16:16-18). The clear warning of 1 Peter 5:8 is that we need to be on guard because the devil is on the prowl, seeking those whom he can devour.

Taking the position that believers cannot be attacked by the devil leaves Christians ignorant of their enemy's tactics and gives them a false sense of security. God's people must be aware of Satan and his schemes so they can stand against him, for their own protection as well as the protection of others. Sometimes believers tend to joke about the devil, but the demonic underworld is not something to be careless about. Jude said that even the archangel Michael *"dared not bring against* [Satan] *a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'"* (Jude 9).

However, many Christians seem to think that they can just go to church, mind their own business, and not cause any trouble to the devil or anyone else. They have no desire to "do battle" with Satan or evil. Yet when their sons become strung out on drugs or their unmarried daughters become pregnant and want abortions, they learn about spiritual warfare because of personal necessity. Satan opposes the people of God in every way he can and seeks to destroy human life. It is unrealistic to think we can ignore our enemy.

Taking THE POSITION THAT BELIEVERS CANNOT BE ATTACKED BY THE DEVIL LEAVES CHRISTIANS IGNORANT OF THEIR ENEMY'S TACTICS AND GIVES THEM A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY.

BECOMING EQUIPPED FOR SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Therefore, while a great spiritual struggle is taking place, most people do not even believe in the reality of what is happening. When they are aware, many in the church do not fully understand how to appropriate the protection and spiritual weapons that are rightfully theirs in Jesus Christ. They may have been told about victory in Jesus and even sung about it, yet, for the most part, they have not been *shown how to walk in that victory*. In other words, many Christians do not know how to claim and use Christ's victory for themselves.

Because so many believers are unequipped spiritually, they are susceptible to the attacks of the devil. And if these Christians are easy prey for the enemy, consider how vulnerable nonbelievers are to him!

We must wake up to the truth of God's Word about the spiritual struggle we are engaged in. My spiritual calling is in visions and revelations. God has given me special insight into spiritual warfare. He has opened up many Scriptures to my mind, and He has instructed me in how to tell other Christians about spiritual battle and how they can overcome the enemy of our souls.

I have seen visions of hell and the judgment of God on sin, as well as visions of heaven. I know that God desires men and women to come to Him and to learn to defeat the devil through spiritual warfare. The purpose of this book is to make the truth about spiritual warfare

clearer to understand so that it will be easier for you to grasp and use the spiritual weaponry available to you.

If you haven't guessed already, I'm angry at the devil! He is sneaky, low-down, deceitful, abhorrent, and anything else negative you can say about him. There never has been a greater affront to God and a bigger threat to His people than Satan. But I want to reassure you that there never has been and never will be a more thorough defeat than Satan will experience in the final outcome of world history. I want to show you how you can be part of that victory over the enemy even now.

CHAPTER 2

THE NATURE OF OUR ENEMY

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

—1 Peter 5:8

THE ORIGIN OF EVIL

Satan's Fall

In order to understand the nature of spiritual warfare, we must comprehend how evil and sin began. Satan was once an angel in heaven named Lucifer. However, he became arrogant and tried to exalt himself over God. The Bible says this about his beginning and his fall:

> *This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you....You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you....You were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings."*
>
> *(Ezekiel 28:12-17 NIV)*

Although Lucifer was a magnificent angel in heaven, he was not content. He gloried in his beauty and brightness, but it wasn't enough for him. He aspired to supremacy. He coveted *the* honor and glory that belongs to God alone. So Lucifer began to sow a spirit of deception and discontent among the angels that were under his command. Before long, this discontent blossomed into open revolt.

> *And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place*

found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

(Revelation 12:7-9)

Satan was kicked out of heaven because of his rebellion. He was no longer Lucifer, which means "the morning star,"[1] or "a shining one."[2] Instead, he became Satan, which means "the accuser"[3] or "the adversary."[4] The Bible gives us a number of designations and names for the fallen Lucifer, such as the following:

- *"the prince of the power of the air"* (Ephesians 2:2)
- *"the ruler of the demons"* (Matthew 12:24)
- *"king"* over the demons in *"the bottomless pit"* (Revelation 9:11)
- *"the ruler of this world"* who is already judged (John 16:11)
- *"the god of this age"* (2 Corinthians 4:4)
- *"the serpent"* (2 Corinthians 11:3)
- *"a great…dragon"* (Revelation 12:3)
- *"the enemy"* (Matthew 13:39)
- *"the tempter"* (Matthew 4:3)
- a false *"angel of light"* (2 Corinthians 11:14)
- *"the accuser of our brethren"* (Revelation 12:10)
- *"the Devil and Satan"* (Revelation 12:9)

Satan's Cohorts

The angels who rebelled with Satan were thrown out of heaven, too, and they became demons, or evil spirits. The Bible indicates that one third of the angels may have rebelled. (See Revelation 12:4.) Any spiritual being who did not obey the Lord received swift judgment. *"God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment"* (2 Peter 2:4). The term *"unclean spirit*[*s*]*"* occurs in the Bible twenty-two times to describe Satan's cohorts. (See, for example, Matthew 10:1; Acts 8:7.) *"Foul spirit"* (Revelation 18:2) is also used. Paul referred to demons that operate through people to deceive others as *"deceiving* [*"seducing"* KJV] *spirits"* (1 Timothy 4:1).

Satan's Deception of Humankind

Remaining rebellious against God after his fall, Satan turned his attention to destroying humankind. He likely used the same tactics on human beings that he had used with the angels who rebelled in heaven. In the Garden of Eden, the devil deceived our first parents into thinking they could be equal with God. Then he enticed them to rebel against Him, too. (See Genesis 3:1-19.)

When HUMANITY SUCCUMBED TO THE ADVERSARY'S TEMPTATION, DISOBEYED GOD, AND FELL, SATAN ENLISTED THE HUMAN RACE IN HIS WAR AGAINST GOD.

When humanity succumbed to the adversary's temptation, disobeyed God, and fell, Satan enlisted the human race in his war against God. The spirit of rebellion still dwells in all unbelievers—those whom the Bible calls *"the sons of disobedience"* (Ephesians 2:2). Even believers have to fight this spirit of rebellion, which tries to rear its head even after we have received salvation through Christ. The Bible calls this spirit of rebellion or disobedience the *"old man,"* or the *"flesh"* that serves the *"law of sin"*:

> *Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and... put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*
>
> *(Ephesians 4:22-24, emphasis added)*

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the ***law of sin*** *which is in my members . O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.*

(Romans 7:23-25, emphasis added)

The sinful nature revolts against God's Word. It opposes all the things of God; it fights against His will. Unless the hearts of the disobedient are turned toward God, they are naturally evil, living as children of their "father," the devil. Jesus said to some with unchanged hearts,

You are of your father the devil, and the desiresof your father you want to do. He was a murdererfrom the beginning, and does not stand in thetruth, because there is no truth in him. When hespeaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

(John 8:44)

Those who follow the devil willfully (or even ignorantly) are called the *"sons of the wicked one"* (Matthew 13:38). The apostle John said they are the *"children of the devil"* (1 John 3:10). Paul called false apostles *"ministers"* of Satan (2 Corinthians 11:15). They belong to the devil's "church": In Revelation 2:9, the Holy Spirit said that some who only pretended to be God's people were from the *"synagogue of Satan."*

SATAN'S ARMY

How does Satan carry out his warfare in his attempt to undermine God's ways and purposes? In the book of Ephesians, the devil is pictured as heading a well-organized army of evil spiritual agents. The terms *"principalities," "powers," "rulers of the darkness of this age"* and *"spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places"* (Ephesians 6:12) are believed by some biblical teachers to denote the ranks in his army.

The POWER OF SATAN'S INFLUENCE IS MULTIPLIED THROUGH HIS VAST ARMY OF EVIL SPIRITS, WHICH IMPLEMENT HIS WILL.

The power of Satan's influence is multiplied through his vast army of evil spirits, which implement his will—gathering information, carrying out orders, and affecting human affairs. The Old Testament reveals that Satan influenced the rulers of Persia and exercised authority over them through a demon called the *"prince of the kingdom of Persia."* (See Daniel 10:12-13.) The angel who spoke to Daniel identified another evil spirit, who influenced a different kingdom, as the *"prince of Greece"* (verse 20).

Satan and his evil spirits can assume visible form, as the devil did when he appeared as a serpent in the Garden of Eden, or they can cause a visible reaction, or manifestation, on people:

- Demons can cause blindness and muteness. (See Matthew

12:22.)

- Demons can cause convulsions and seizures. (See, for example, Mark 9:17-20.)
- Demons can cause a person to act in a self-destructive way or with bizarre behavior. (See, for example, Luke 8:27-29.)
- Demons have been known to compel animals to destroy themselves. (See, for example, Luke 8:30- 33.)
- Demons can create powerful illusions and mimic the power of God. (See, for example, Exodus 7:11- 12.)
- The devil and his followers can perform signs and wonders. (See Matthew 24:24.)

Just as a strong general can impose a high degree of control over his army, and through his troops carry out his program over a vast area, so the devil rules much of his worldwide kingdom of darkness through his subordinates.

SATAN IS DEFEATED

Yet the power that Satan has is limited. Remember that Lucifer is a created being whose powers are vastly inferior to the Creator's.

In addition, in His sovereignty and mercy, God the Father did not want humanity to remain in its fallen state and be captive to the wiles of the enemy. Because of His incomparable love for all people, and His desire to redeem them from sin and death, God sent His Son Jesus to the earth to engage Satan in open warfare and defeat him. *"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil"* (1 John 3:8).

Because OF HIS INCOMPARABLE LOVE FOR ALL PEOPLE, GOD SENT HIS SON JESUS TO THE EARTH TO ENGAGE SATAN IN OPEN WARFARE AND DEFEAT HIM.

Jesus attacked Satan and his strongholds directly by casting evil spirits out of people, opening blind eyes, straightening crooked limbs, unstopping deaf ears, raising the dead, and releasing people from spiritual bondage. For example, Jesus healed and delivered…

- the man who was blind and mute because of demon-possession. (See Matthew 12:22.)
- the boy who had epileptic-like seizures and was deaf and mute because of an unclean spirit. (See, for example, Mark 9:17-29.)
- the man who became a maniac and isolated himself from

society because he was demon-possessed. (See, for example, Luke 8:27-33.)

- the woman who was afflicted and bent over for eighteen years because she had a *"spirit of infirmity"* from Satan. (See Luke 13:10-16.)
- the little girl who was ill and was said to have been *"severely demon-possessed."* (See, for example, Matthew 15:22-28.)
- the man in the synagogue who was thrown to the floor by a *"spirit of an unclean demon."* (See Luke 4:33-36.)

The climax of Jesus' ministry on earth was His death on the cross for the sins of the world and His triumphant resurrection from the grave. He freed us from the snare of the enemy so that we could be reconciled to God the Father and start living in His kingdom of love and truth. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus struck the enemy with a mortal wound that will ultimately lead to the total demise of the devil.

The FINAL OUTCOME OF OUR SPIRITUAL WARFARE WITH THE ENEMY WAS ACTUALLY DETERMINED BY GOD FROM THE BEGINNING.

In His victory, Jesus assures us that we, the born-again children of God, can also have victory in every battle against Satan. *"But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Corinthians 15:57 NIV).

Christians are the redeemed who have turned from sin and Satan back to God and have joined His fight against the forces of darkness.

The final outcome of our spiritual warfare with the enemy was actually determined by God from the beginning. Right after the devil led mankind into disobedience, the Lord told Satan, *"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed* [Jesus]; *He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel"* (Genesis 3:15). As the Second Adam, Jesus resisted evil and obeyed God even to the point of death on the cross.

When Christ overcame sin and death, Satan lost his claim over humanity. The Bible says that Jesus released us forever from the satanic bondage of fear:

> *Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*
>
> *(Hebrews 2:14-17 NASB)*

When CHRIST OVERCAME SIN AND DEATH, SATAN LOST HIS CLAIM OVER HUMANITY.

In Revelation, John described Satan's final, cosmic defeat in the drama of the ages: *"The devil, who deceived…, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever"* (Revelation

20:10). Centuries earlier, the prophet Isaiah had also seen Satan's demise through the telescope of prophecy:

> *How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground,you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: "I will ascend into heaven, I willexalt my throne above the stars of God; I will alsosit on the mount of the congregation on the farthestsides of the north; I will ascend above the heights ofthe clouds, I will be like the Most High." Yet youshall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depthsof the Pit. Those who see you will gaze at you,...saying:"Is this the man who made the earth tremble,who shook kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities, who did not openthe house of his prisoners?"*
>
> *(Isaiah 14:12-17)*

Satan takes people prisoner, but Jesus frees them. At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus announced,

> *The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He hasanointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; Hehas sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaimliberty to the captives and recovery of sight to theblind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.*
>
> *(Luke 4:18)*

SPIRITUAL WARFARE CONTINUES

Since Christ has defeated Satan, why is the devil still our enemy? You might think that he would have no more strength to use against us. But this is not the case, because we have not yet reached the end of the age, and God's purposes for the world are not yet complete. God's people are still locked in a tremendous conflict with satanic forces. Satan has not ceased fighting God and God's people. Evil spirits are still active and dangerous. As Paul told us, *"We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places"* (Ephesians 6:12). Our greatest struggles in life are against the powers of this dark world.

Why are so many people in the world today caught up in indescribable anguish and suffering? Some of this pain, as I wrote earlier, has to do with the fact that we live in a fallen world. Yet other suffering is due to the devil's increasing attacks. At the end of time, when Satan is defeated, he will no longer be able to exert any power or influence over the world. Satan knows his time is short, and he wants to destroy as many people as he can in the time he has left.

Although HE IS LIMITED IN WHAT HE CAN DO, SATAN USES EVERYTHING IN HIS POWER AND AT HIS DISPOSAL TO DECEIVE AND DESTROY.

The fallen angels who followed Satan in rebellion also know their time is limited. In fact, they fear a "premature" final judgment. In Matthew 8:29, a legion of demons asked Jesus why He had come to punish them "before their time." *"Suddenly* [the demons] *cried out, saying, 'What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?'"* They were startled because they knew they would lose a final confrontation with Jesus, but they didn't expect Him to appear at that time and exercise authority over them. In Luke's account of this incident, the unclean spirits begged Jesus not to send them to the abyss. (See Luke 8:27-35.)

Satan and the angels who fell with him know there is an appointed day for their final judgment, and they also know they are always subject to Jesus' commands. In the Bible, Satan is never referred to as having power beyond the ability to deceive those who are willing to believe his lies and trust in the limited power granted to him. Yet, although he is limited in what he can do, he uses everything in his power and at his disposal to deceive and destroy.

The ANTAGONISM BETWEEN THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST AND THE SPIRIT OF SATAN IS EVIDENT IN EVERY ARENA OF LIFE.

Therefore, until the day when Christ returns and the enemy is ultimately defeated, spiritual warfare will continue. Even though we know that Christ will eliminate the forces of evil in the end, this knowledge does not lessen the fierceness of the struggle or its importance. The enemy that prompted rebellion in heaven still

inspires rebellion on earth. Remember that the Bible refers to Satan as the *"god of this age"* (2 Corinthians 4:4). The antagonism between the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of Satan is evident in every arena of life.

We should not be surprised at these battles. Peter wrote, *"Do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you"* (1 Peter 4:12). Jesus said, *"In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33).

We now have the means of victory! Instead of being at the enemy's mercy, we can defeat him through Christ and the power of His resurrection. The victory is ours to receive and apply. We are to battle against injustice, evil, and all the works of Satan.

SUCCESSFULLY BATTLING THE FORCES OF DARKNESS

How can we successfully do battle with the forces of darkness? It is through the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of the Word of God that we can learn to appropriate what Jesus won for us at Calvary and defeat the work of the enemy. To begin, we must do the following.

Be Redeemed from the Power of Satan

In order to understand and engage in spiritual warfare, you first have to be redeemed from the power of the enemy. Have you asked God to forgive your sins, and have you received Jesus as the Lord and Savior of your life? You need to do this right now, so that you can comprehend and put into practice scriptural truths concerning this spiritual war.

When Saul was converted and became the apostle Paul, Jesus told him that he was to *"turn* [people] *from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me"* (Acts 26:18). God redeems all those who put their faith in Jesus. He transfers them out of the *"dominion of darkness,"* or the realm of Satan, and brings them into Christ's realm, which is the kingdom of God. (See Colossians 1:13 NIV.)

If you do not know which kingdom you truly belong to, why not pause in your reading right now, and pray this prayer?

> Dear God, I confess that I have lived in rebellion against You and tried to live my life in my own way. I haven't acknowledged You as My Creator and Lord. There are conflicts and problems in my life that I cannot cope with alone. I cannot counteract the assaults of the enemy against me. I need Your help. I confess to You all my sins and shortcomings. I ask You to forgive me and come into my heart. I ask You to free me from my guilt. Lift the

heavy burden of condemnation from my soul through the blood of Jesus. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit and help me to live by Your Spirit from now on. Grant me the joy and peace that can come only from You. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

At the very instant of your conversion, you become a child of God, fully justified, fully forgiven, and sharing in the inheritance with Christ. Your life can begin to be conformed to that of Jesus Christ as you bring your thoughts and actions in line with God's Word and respond daily to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Learn Satan's Tactics and How to Counteract Them

Second, to effectively engage your spiritual enemy, you must know his tactics and how to counteract them. You cannot leave yourself open to all manner of satanic assaults and constantly be crippled or defeated by the enemy. Our example is Jesus and how He confronted the devil. He demonstrated mastery over all the powers and forces of evil. During the ministry of the Master, He challenged Satan whenever He had an opportunity, whether it was in the synagogue or in a cemetery. (See, for example, Luke 4:33-35; Mark 5:2-15.)

The devil is deceitful, presumptuous, cruel, fierce, wicked, subtle, and powerful. Yet he also is cowardly and, again, has limitations. He flees at the name of Jesus or when a believer pleads the blood of the Son of God over a person or situation. Through Christ's victory, we can tread on the head of Satan; we can keep him under our feet. Through the precious blood of Jesus, we *can* overcome the devil.

Instead OF BEING AT THE ENEMY'S MERCY, WE CAN DEFEAT HIM THROUGH CHRIST AND THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION.

In New Testament days, the Romans enjoyed throwing Christians to the lions in a mainly futile attempt to have them renounce their faith in Christ. The Romans gathered in the Coliseum, where they would throw fifty or more Christians into the arena and wait to see who would deny Christ first. Those who didn't deny the Lord were literally eaten alive.

Satan is more like the lions than the Romans. *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Peter 5:8). He is not interested in entertainment; he wants to annihilate the work of the church. He wants to destroy people and usher them into hell. Again, Satan knows his fate—eternity in the lake of fire—is sealed, and he will do whatever it takes to carry as many souls with him as he can. He is willing to use any tactic or device to make people listen to him and follow him. We must be equipped for spiritual combat. We need to learn to resist the rebellion that caused the fall of Lucifer and to do spiritual battle on behalf of those who are vulnerable to the enemy. This book is designed to show you the spiritual armor God has given you and how to use it.

Satan is the foe of every human being, and especially of believers who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. In spiritual warfare, we must clearly understand that we are not at war with other people. We do not fight against unbelievers, "sinners," and reprobates; we are at war with Satan, who holds people captive to his will:

> *A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.*
>
> *(2 Timothy 2:24-26)*

We often try to change people who are not doing what is right. But their behavior has its roots in something much larger. This does not

excuse the wrong things they do or relieve them of their responsibility, but it helps us to focus on the real enemy. As bad as some people may seem, they are merely conduits for spiritual battle. Satan has been successful in getting us to fight people rather than battling what is really causing people to be the way they are.

THE FRONT LINES OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

We are on the front lines of spiritual warfare every day. God's people are experiencing attack as perhaps never before. Trouble is all around us. The natural consequences of our fallen world are depicted in our daily newscasts and newspapers with sad accounts of violence, suffering, and disaster. We can sense a spirit of rebellion in the attitudes of the world. We confront the world's temptation and the devil's deceit in our everyday lives as we struggle with unseen, sinister forces that want to pull us down and destroy us. Sin is rampant in the earth as we draw closer to the final confrontation between God and Satan. The devil is frantically working to try to wreck the plans and programs of God.

When WE ARE IN CHRIST AND ARE UNDER THE GRACE AND PROTECTION OF HIS SACRIFICIAL DEATH ON CALVARY, WE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 2:11 that we are not to let Satan *"take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices."* Many times, he gets the advantage over people who are not aware of how he works. It is time for God's people to know the tactics of the devil. It is high time for the army of God to rise up and say, "Enough is enough!"

The Lord has promised in His Word that we can be wiser than our enemies. The psalmist said to God, *"You, through Your*

commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me" (Psalm 119:98). Satan is our greatest enemy, and yet we can be wiser and stronger than he is through the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I have been engaged in spiritual warfare for a number of years. I know from personal experience what it is like to be opposed by unseen, diabolical spiritual enemies that have great strength and power. I have been attacked by the devil and his coalition of evil forces, but the almighty God has always given me the victory.

In the same way, certain victory is assured to you through Christ. When we are in Christ and have appropriated the grace and protection of His sacrificial death on Calvary, we have nothing to fear. The message of deliverance and empowerment by the Holy Spirit that Jesus came to earth to proclaim is His message for us today.

Hallelujah! Jesus provides the promise of glorious victory. In Him, we *have* won and *will* win over the enemy.

CHAPTER 3

THE ENEMY'S STRATEGIES

Lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.
—2 Corinthians 2:11

The apostle Paul talked about the *"wiles"* (or *"schemes"* NIV, NASB) of the devil in Ephesians 6:11. Notice that these words are in the plural. Satan uses many different methods and devices to cause people to stumble. Wiles involve deceit and trickery. Deception, seduction, and lies are powerful tools of the enemy.

TACTICAL MANEUVERS EMPLOYED BY THE ENEMY

As we discussed earlier, the devil is a created being; therefore, he is not omnipresent (everywhere at once), omnipotent (all powerful), or omniscient (all knowing). He is subject to the limits God has placed on him. In order to carry out his program, he has to work through subordinates—both demonic and human. The following are some of his major strategies.

Keeping People in Spiritual Darkness

It is Satan's goal to keep people in ignorance and apathy toward salvation through Jesus Christ. I have had many visions in which I saw people walking in darkness, which I understood to be spiritual darkness. Their eyes and ears would be covered with what looked like some kind of skin. God revealed to me that spiritual blindness and deafness is the condition of many people today.

The DEVIL'S PRIMARY STRATEGY IS TO KEEP PEOPLE FROM ACCEPTING JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOR, THUS ENSURING THEIR CONTINUAL SPIRITUAL BONDAGE AND CONDEMNATION.

The Bible speaks about this condition in a number of Scriptures, such as the following:

> *Hear this now, O foolish people, without understanding, who have eyes and see not, and who have ears and hear not.*
>
> *(Jeremiah 5:21)*

> *Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellioushouse, which has eyes to see but does not see, andears to hear but does not hear; for they are a rebellioushouse.*
>
> *(Ezekiel 12:2)*

> *The hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.*
>
> *(Acts 28:27)*

The *"god of this age"* has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from believing the gospel. (See 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.) The devil's primary strategy is to keep each person from hearing the gospel, recognizing the truth, and accepting Jesus Christ as Savior, thus ensuring his or her continual spiritual bondage and condemnation.

Stealing the Word from People's Hearts

Yet the old deceiver doesn't stop at that. In Luke 8:5-15, in the parable of the sower, Jesus taught that when some people do hear the gospel, *"the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved"* (Luke 8:12).

The Bible says that Satan works *"with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved"* (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). When people hear God's truth, they must receive it and hold on to it because the enemy will try to snatch it from them.

Tempting People Away from the Truth

When people do receive the truth, Satan tries to draw them away from it through temptation. Jesus talked about those who, *"when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away"* (Luke 8:13). The temptation to doubt, fear, or turn back to the ways of the world is very real.

How can we develop deep spiritual roots? By staying close to Christ and holding on to faith in Him: *"That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love..."* (Ephesians 3:17). *"As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving"* (Colossians 2:6-7). It is crucial that we become established in God's Word in order to remain steadfast in the Lord.

Enticing People with the Cares and Riches of the World

Jesus continued the parable of the sower by talking about *"those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity"* (Luke 8:14). Satan is at work constantly to delude people into submitting to him. The Bible says that, in his efforts to deceive, *"Satan…transforms himself into an angel of light"* (2 Corinthians 11:14). He "chokes" people spiritually by enticing them to feed on their own selfish desires rather than on the Word of God.

In another teaching, Jesus said that we are to seek God and His kingdom first in our lives. (See Matthew 6:33.) When our priorities become skewed so that we pursue our own comforts and ignore God's concerns, then we are falling into this deception of the enemy. Satan wants to keep us from bearing fruit for God and being effective for His kingdom.

> *Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*
> *(James 4:4)*

In order to bear spiritual fruit, we must remain in Christ and pursue God's thoughts and ways. Jesus said, *"The ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience"* (Luke 8:15). We must let the Word of God be planted and bring forth fruit in our lives.

When OUR PRIORITIES BECOME SKEWED SO THAT WE PURSUE OUR OWN COMFORTS AND IGNORE GOD'S CONCERNS, THEN WE ARE FALLING PREY TO THE ENEMY'S DECEPTION.

Jesus taught that if we remain in Him, we will bear fruit. If we do not, we will become like a withered branch that has no useful purpose:

> *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.*
>
> *(John 15:4-6)*

Psalm 1 emphasizes the same idea: When a person delights in God and His Word, *"he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper"* (Psalm 1:3).

Planting Counterfeit Believers among Us

As our sworn enemy, Satan hates God and His people, the church. Remember that he would like to destroy us. He wants to neutralize the body of Christ through doubts and questions. He wants to cause dissent and destruction by bringing jealousy and confusion among God's people. He wants to deceive believers and draw them away from the truth.

In Matthew 13:24-30, in the parable of the wheat and the tares, Jesus told of a man who sowed his field, and while he slept, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat. Then, Jesus explained the symbolism of this parable to His disciples:

> *He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age.*
>
> *(Matthew 13:37-39)*

Jesus said that only at the harvest (when He returns) can the tares be separated from the wheat.

In his evil mind, Satan has devised the cunning strategy of infiltrating the ranks of the righteous people of God by planting counterfeit Christians among them. Paul spoke of the dangers of *"false brethren"* (2 Corinthians 11:26). These pseudo-believers try to entrap followers of Christ and discredit those who speak the truth. Their deceptions can be very subtle. Such imposters teach *"a*

different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6-7). Paul used strong words to warn believers against this false gospel: *"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed"* (verse 8).

Teachers who claim to teach the Bible, but are teaching doctrines from hell, are undermining the body of Christ in many places today. For example, through religious cults, and even within the church itself, counterfeit believers will try to substitute man's "righteousness" for God's righteousness. *"Being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God"* (Romans 10:3). They teach a counterfeit doctrine that is not in agreement with the Word of God.

Satan HAS DEVISED THE CUNNING STRATEGY OF INFILTRATING THE RANKS OF THE RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE OF GOD BY PLANTING COUNTERFEIT CHRISTIANS AMONG THEM.

John wrote,

> *And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*
>
> *(1 John 5:20-21)*

Paul warned against the devil's strategy in 2 Corinthians 11:3: "*I*

fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). Satan's battle strategy in spiritual warfare is to deceive us into believing his lies. He has been working this plan for years, and he's very good at it. Don't accept the devil's facsimiles, his substitutes, his look-alikes! Accept only the genuine that comes from God.

Anyone can quote from the Bible. Christians today need to be like the Bereans in the early church. They investigated what Paul and Silas were teaching them to see whether the apostles' teachings agreed with the Scriptures. (See Acts 17:11.)

There IS NO PLACE TO HIDE OR ESCAPE FROM THE EFFECTS OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE, EVEN IN CHURCH!

It is clear that there is no place to hide or escape from the effects of spiritual warfare. Even in church, we must fight the devil at times. It is the responsibility of faithful pastors and elders to remove impostors and false teachers from local congregations through proper church discipline. Yet all Christians must learn to be discerning.

Again, in the parable of the wheat and the tares, Jesus indicated that we won't always be able to completely separate the false from the true until the truth is revealed at the end of the age. It is therefore impossible to completely cleanse the church of enemy agents. For this reason, we must be constantly on guard. We must measure all things by the Word of God, testing not only the words of fellow believers, but also their "fruit"—their behavior and attitudes. If you encounter a spirit of pride and willfulness, be careful. Apply the

Word of God and church discipline with both conviction and humility. *"Correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction"* (2 Timothy 4:2 NIV).

Using Popular Culture

Spiritual warfare has an impact on countries and their cultures. According to Daniel 10, entire nations are influenced by the invisible battle in the angelic realm. Working through the popular culture is a favorite tactic of Satan because it multiplies his effectiveness. As the enemy and his demons can each be in only one place at a time, and cannot personally work in every human heart, he influences multitudes through a system of thought the Bible calls *"the world."*

John wrote,

> *Do not love the world or the things in the world. Ifanyone loves the world, the love of the Father is notin him. For all that is in the world; the lust of theflesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; is not of the Father but is of the world.*
> *(1 John 2:15-16)*

The Bible uses the term *"world,"* in this context, to describe fallen humanity's mind-set and desires, which dominate the lives of most people today. In general, the "world" controls the culture. Your worldview is vital because it affects your approach to spiritual warfare. It colors the way you see the nonmaterial world, and it determines whether you even believe in a spiritual realm. Worldly philosophies oppose the truth of the gospel, including all efforts to bring men and women to Christ. In Western society, the world system emphasizes the temporal rather than the eternal. It focuses on comfort and self-indulgence rather than responsibility and sacrifice for

others. The devil influences multitudes of people into living for the moment. They follow him heedlessly as they buy into the popular thinking of the day.

Your WORLDVIEW IS VITAL BECAUSE IT AFFECTS YOUR APPROACH TO SPIRITUAL WARFARE.

Individual expressions of this thought-system may vary from one culture to another. For example, one culture may emphasize legalism rather than license. However, the end result is the same for people everywhere—deception and destruction.

Preying on the Sinful Nature of Man

In the depths of depravity found in the human heart, our adversary has fertile soil. As is stated so clearly in the second chapter of Ephesians, before we came to Christ, we…

- *"were dead in trespasses and sins"* (verse 1).
- *"walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air"* (verse 2).
- *"all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath"* (verse 3).

The devil's power over fallen humanity is destructive and fearful. Multitudes of people help Satan function in his role as the god of this world by allowing him to exacerbate the lusts of their flesh, or their sinful natures.

When we are born again through Jesus, however, we become new creatures in Christ. *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new"* (2 Corinthians 5:17). We no longer need to obey sin or Satan. We have a new Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we serve Him and follow His commands.

We will discuss the conflict between the flesh and the spirit, as well as how to be victorious in this warfare, more fully in a later chapter.

Using Deceit

Jesus often talked about the deceitful nature of the devil. One day, Jesus had a confrontation with the Pharisees. He told them in unmistakable terms that their inability to recognize the truth was due to the fact they were the "children of the devil," who is the *"father of lies"* (John 8:44 NIV):

> *Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."*
>
> *(John 8:42-44)*

The devil is the creator of falsehoods. He is the fountainhead of all lies. He is forever trying to deceive. Sometimes, he plagiarizes and quotes reliable sources, but even then, he puts the truth in an altogether different context so that it creates an illusion. In fact, the devil began his career as Satan by deluding *himself* into believing that he could claim a position of equality with the Most High God. He is extremely self-centered and has an unrealistic view of his abilities: *"You have said in your heart: '...I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;...I will be like the Most High'"* (Isaiah 14:13-14).

Satan's self-deception caused him to fall from his position of high

honor, and it is still his nature to lie and distort the truth. Not only does he deceive others in the manner of one who knows the truth and seeks to mislead, but he also lies because his own intelligence has been darkened by his perverted will. He is the father of lies because he deluded himself and willfully persists in this self-delusion.

We must be careful not to fall prey to his deceitful strategy—and his nature. We need to stick closely to God's truth and ask the Holy Spirit to direct us. Jesus promised us, *"When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth"* (John 16:13).

Using Accusation

Satan uses accusations, false indictments, and trumped-up charges to try to tear down the people of God. Revelation 12:10 calls the devil the *"accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night."* In fact, the Greek word that we translate as *devil* is *diabolos* , which means "false accuser" or "slanderer."[1]

Satan accused Jesus, and we can be assured that he will also accuse all who follow the Lord. He puts the worst possible interpretation on any act of faith and obedience, and he duplicates his accusing spirit in the fleshly nature of unbelievers. Some people are so warped and twisted that they perceive even the best actions of God's people to be evil. Believers are bombarded with all kinds of accusations from both inside and outside the church. As Christians, we have to guard against having a complaining and accusing attitude toward our fellow believers. We must recognize that such an attitude comes from our sinful nature—and that our enemy may be inciting it in us!

Satan USES ACCUSATIONS, FALSE INDICTMENTS, AND TRUMPED-UP CHARGES TO TRY TO TEAR DOWN THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

A classic example of Satan as accuser is in the book of Job:

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them....So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him,

around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

(Job 1:6, 9-12)

Satan claimed that Job served God only because he was prosperous and because God had put a wall around him, protecting him from misfortune. He contended (mistakenly) that Job would serve God only as long as God blessed him. God then granted Satan the authority to afflict Job, but within strict limits.

Through the book of Job, God permits us to grasp the issues of spiritual warfare in a more complete way by revealing what was going on beyond the earthly drama and giving us an insightful glimpse into His eternal purposes. While Job's sufferings appeared to be from natural causes, they were, in truth, of satanic origin. However, God always exercised sovereign control over the events of His servant's life and brought about justice and restoration.

In another example, the prophet Zechariah was given this vision of the spiritual realm: *"Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him"* (Zechariah 3:1). Apparently, God permitted Satan this privilege so that He could demonstrate His grace and forgiveness toward sinners. The passage continues,

And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?"

Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments , and was standing before the Angel. Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes."

(Zechariah 3:2-4)

Likewise, when we come before God in prayer, Satan may be there to accuse us. The devil may make a point of calling attention to our shortcomings and our sin or *"filthy garments,"* but there is an answer for his accusations.

In the case of Joshua the high priest, God said, *"The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!"* He let the devil know that He had chosen Joshua to be His servant. God instructed the angels standing nearby, *"'Take away the filthy garments from him.' And to* [Joshua] *He said, 'See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes.'"*

Thank God, He removes our sins, and He clothes us in His righteousness when we are washed by the blood of Jesus! One of the greatest weapons we have in spiritual warfare is the knowledge that God dismisses Satan's accusations against us, showing him that we are now covered by the righteousness of Christ. God always responds to us in mercy and love. We must recognize that, because of Jesus, we are truly righteous in God's eyes.

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns?

(Romans 8:31-34)

COUNTERACTING SATAN'S STRATEGIES

In our own strength, we are helpless to resist the devil's temptations and accusations. God's children are often confused, paralyzed, and even driven to despair when they are exposed to the merciless attacks of the accuser. However, you don't have to be a victim; you can be a victor! Knowledge of the Word will help you to wage spiritual warfare against the devil and the forces of evil in his kingdom.

Since we war against unseen forces, we must wage our battles by faith and not by sight. (See 2 Corinthians 5:7.) We cannot fight back in our own strength; we must remember to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit, and not our own resources, in our battles with the enemy. The apostle Peter learned this lesson the hard way. Self-confidence prompted him to declare his willingness to die for Christ, but the Lord warned him,

> *Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you,that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayedfor you, that your faith should not fail; and whenyou have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren*
>
> *(Luke 22:31-32)*

Peter's rash boasting in his own abilities to remain faithful to Christ opened the door for the devil to cause him to fall. Jesus told Peter the devil's plan ahead of time and promised to intercede for him. Peter's failures, and the subsequent accusations of the devil,

would sift Peter like wheat, confusing him, demoralizing him, and making him vulnerable to losing his faith. But Jesus' prayers sustained him.

Knowledge OF THE WORD WILL HELP YOU TO WAGE SPIRITUAL WARFARE AGAINST THE DEVIL AND THE FORCES OF EVIL IN HIS KINGDOM.

Although Peter denied his Lord in fear three times, he repented, and His relationship with Christ was restored. Because of Jesus' intercession, Peter's faith did not fail. Likewise, our sins and failings make us vulnerable to Satan's accusations, but we have the prayers of Christ on our behalf. *"Christ…is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us"* (Romans 8:34). *"We have a great High Priest…, Jesus the Son of God.…*[He can] *sympathize with our weaknesses,* [and] *was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin"* (Hebrews 4:14-15). *"He always lives to make intercession for* [us]*"* (Hebrews 7:25). Jesus is the only One in history who could say, *"The ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me"* (John 14:30). Jesus' motives are always beyond question, His actions are always above reproach, and He is praying and working on our behalf.

I believe that, years after this interchange with Jesus, when Peter was writing to a group of Christians who were being persecuted, he remembered the attack of Satan. Wanting to encourage them to hold on to their faith, he called the devil an enemy who prowls around like a lion, looking for someone to devour, and he warned the believers to be alert to him. (See 1 Peter 5:8.) Peter knew by personal experience

what it meant to be shaken in the grip of Satan.

Self-confidence is a noble trait only if we realize that our strength is in Christ. We must stand before God on the basis of the righteousness of Christ, not our own righteousness. *"For we…who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh"* (Philippians 3:3).

Satan hasn't been granted the power to devour the children of God, but he can influence us to the point of making us serve his ends if we don't watch and pray. He is a ruthless, merciless fiend whose goal is to defeat and destroy us. He should never be taken lightly.

If you yield to Satan, his evil influence can affect your health, moods, thoughts, and imagination. Why did Judas Iscariot betray Jesus and finally commit suicide instead of repenting? He allowed himself to listen to the temptations and lies of the enemy. The Bible tells us that *"Satan entered Judas…who was numbered among the twelve. So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them"* (Luke 22:3-4). Then, after his betrayal, when the impact of what he had done hit him, Judas took his own life instead of repenting. Judas's response is in clear contrast with Peter's, who repented and was restored.

We cannot make the mistake of minimizing Satan's power or denying the reality of his kingdom of evil. But we must also avoid the error of falling into the devil's condemnation and losing our faith and trust in our heavenly Father. Remember that the enemy cannot go beyond the limits set by God. If we do fall into his deceitful traps and sin, we can repent and receive forgiveness through the blood of Christ. The born-again believer who submits to God and resists the

devil will cause him to flee. (See James 4:7.)

CHAPTER 4

THE ENEMY'S STRONGHOLDS

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

—2 Corinthians 10:4-5

TYPES OF SPIRITUAL STRONGHOLDS

We have looked at the major strategies the enemy uses to draw people away from God and to serve his evil ends. In this chapter, I want to discuss various spiritual strongholds through which the enemy dominates and oppresses people. We must learn to recognize them for what they are so that we can effectively combat them.

Emotional Problems

In my experience, one type of spiritual stronghold is manifested through severe emotional problems. Not all emotional problems are strongholds, but they may be when emotional disturbances recur over and over and there seems to be no permanent cure or relief from them. In other words, when they persist in the life and personality of an individual. Some of the most common symptoms of this stronghold are anger, depression, fear, feelings of inferiority, feelings of insecurity, feelings of rejection (feeling unwanted and unloved), hatred, jealousy, resentment, self-pity, and worry.

Mental Problems

Another spiritual stronghold is the stifling grip of mental problems. These problems occur through disturbances in the mind or in the thought life. Caused by distorted thinking, this stronghold of evil brings about mental torment. It manifests itself in unrealistic and unexplained procrastination, incomprehensible indecision, wavering, compromise, confusion, delusions, doubt, rationalization, and even the loss of memory.

Disruptive Speech

Satan also builds spiritual strongholds in the lives of individuals through disruptive speech. This stronghold may be revealed in uncontrolled outbursts that occur suddenly and without warning. Yet it often manifests itself through lying, profanity, blasphemy, criticism, mockery, railing, and gossip.

Sexual Problems

Another form of spiritual oppression often seen today is the stronghold of sexual problems. This includes, but is not limited to, recurring unclean thoughts and impure sexual acts. It may include fantasy sexual experiences, masturbation, lust, provocative and lewd behavior, homosexuality, fornication, adultery, incest, and other perversions.

Addictions

The enemy wants to destroy as many souls as he can, and he has found that addictions are an effective weapon to use. Satan loves to oppress people through dependence on such things as nicotine, alcohol, illegal drugs, prescription and over-the-counter medications, gambling, television, the Internet, caffeine, and even food, including salt and sugar. Therefore, what some psychologists and psychiatrists call an "addictive personality" may actually be the result of a spiritual stronghold.

We MUST LEARN TO RECOGNIZE VARIOUS SPIRITUAL STRONGHOLDS THROUGH WHICH THE ENEMY DOMINATES AND OPPRESSES PEOPLE SO WE CAN EFFECTIVELY COMBAT THEM.

Physical Infirmities

While not all physical infirmities are strongholds, God revealed to me that a number of diseases and physical afflictions are due to spirits of infirmity. When a demon of infirmity is cast out, there is often the need to pray for a healing of whatever damage has resulted. A close and necessary relationship exists between deliverance and healing.

HOW STRONGHOLDS DEVELOP

Through Occult Activity

Becoming involved with the occult or spiritism in any form can open the door to spiritual strongholds. This includes séances, witchcraft, black magic, Wicca, ouija boards, levitation, palmistry, handwriting analysis, automatic handwriting, ESP, hypnosis, horoscopes, astrology, fortune-telling, seeking after spirits of the dead, new age meditation, yoga, divination, mantras, and any form of devil worship.

Many people today talk about spirituality, but they are plugged in to the wrong spirit. Unfortunately, psychics and mediums are popular today, as they were in certain Bible times, and many people are falling into this grievous stronghold.

Any method of seeking supernatural knowledge, wisdom, guidance, and power apart from God is forbidden in the Bible. (See, for example, Deuteronomy 18:9-14.) Believers are commanded to avoid every form of participation in demonic practices. We are not to watch movies or television programs that have demonic content, read demonic books, participate in demonic games, or listen to songs that have demonic lyrics.

Many times, I have seen demons attracted to certain homes because members of these households have taken objects or literature of occult or religious error into the homes. Occult items attract evil spirits.

Through False Religion and Doctrine

Believing and adopting a false religion or doctrine can also allow Satan to build a stronghold in a person's mind. If you have ever tried to talk to someone who has accepted a pagan religion, philosophy, cult, or mind science, you know how entrenched these strongholds can be.

Paul warned us this way:

> *Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophyand empty deceit, according to the tradition ofmen, according to the basic principles of the world,and not according to Christ.*
>
> *(Colossians 2:8)*

We are warned in 1 Timothy 4:1 that, in the last days, there will be a great increase of doctrinal error promoted by "*deceiving*" or "*seducing*" (KJV) spirits and "*doctrines of demons,*" which will infiltrate the church. Any doctrine that attacks the humanity and deity of Jesus Christ or denies the inspiration of Scripture is a false doctrine. Moreover, those who promote disunity in the body of Christ or cause confusion in the church through their obsession with or insistence on false doctrines have fallen victim to a spiritual stronghold. In addition, teaching that distracts Christians from the authentic move of God's Spirit can lead to a stronghold.

M any PEOPLE TODAY TALK ABOUT SPIRITUALITY, BUT THEY ARE PLUGGED IN TO THE WRONG SPIRIT.

Through Spiritual Pride or Vanity

Being puffed up with a sense of superiority can be a manifestation of a religious stronghold. This is something we especially have to guard against. The apostle Paul was given a *"thorn in the flesh"* to keep him from being conceited by his many revelations. (See 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.) The stronghold of spiritual conceit or vanity fosters an emphasis on fleshly activities as a supposed gateway to the spiritual.

Vanity is a reflection of a prideful spirit, which was Satan's original sin. The Bible warns that if we are "*puffed up with pride,"* we may *"fall into the same condemnation as the devil"* (1 Timothy 3:6).

Vanity can make the person who is in error unteachable, and it is the ultimate expression of self-sufficiency. It says, "I can handle life by myself. I can save myself. I don't need God." In this way, vanity leads to personal idolatry (making a god of yourself and your capabilities) and can even lead to the worship of demons. The forces of evil try to persuade men and women to worship idols rather than God.

Through Fear

Satan wants us to be filled with fear and to doubt God's promises and provision. Fear is deadly; it cripples, stifles, and binds. Worry can be a terrible strain on the body. The enemy uses fear to oppress us so that we are paralyzed and ineffective in serving God. When we continually give in to fear, it can become a stronghold. We read in Revelation,

> *He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and Iwill be his God and he shall be My son. But thecowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers,sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liarsshall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*
>
> *(Revelation 21:7-8, emphasis added)*

In this passage, the word *"cowardly"* seems to imply fear that causes a person to be faithless,[2] perhaps to the point of denying or rejecting Christ. The Bible tells us that *"whatever is not from faith is sin"* (Romans 14:23). The oppression of fear, as well as its remedy, can be seen in John's statement, *"There is no fear in love; but* ***perfect love casts out fear****, because* ***fear involves torment****. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love"* (1 John 4:18, emphasis added).

The ENEMY USES FEAR TO OPPRESS US SO THAT WE ARE PARALYZED AND INEFFECTIVE IN SERVING GOD.

We must not give in to fear that would keep us from loving and

serving God. Remember that Jesus came to *"release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage"* (Hebrew 2:15). Paul emphasized,

> *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*
>
> *(Romans 8:15-17)*

Paul also wrote, *"God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind"* (2 Timothy 1:7).

In combating fear, we must trust fully in our relationship with God the Father. As His children, we can rest in the knowledge of His perfect love toward us. We must not allow the enemy to cause us to doubt His guidance, protection, and provision.

Through other Sin

Willful participation in sin is another way the enemy can gain a foothold in our lives. If unchecked, a foothold can become a stronghold. The book of Ephesians explains how we are to replace the sin in our lives with new attitudes and actions that build up others and ourselves:

> *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*
>
> *(Ephesians 4:22-32 NIV, emphasis added)*

DEFEATING SATAN'S STRONGHOLDS

Ignorance, idolatry, and lust are Satan's strongholds in the lives of some people, while vain imaginations, proud conceits, and fear are his strongholds in others. With every stronghold, the devil attempts to keep men and women from faith and obedience to the gospel. He wants their hearts as his own property.

The Bible tells us that the weapons with which we are to fight the enemy are not the weapons of this world, which have no power over him. Instead, the spiritual weapons God gives us have divine power to demolish satanic strongholds. These strategic assets can take into captivity *every* thought to the obedience of Christ. We are to cast down *"arguments"* or *"imaginations"* (KJV), those carnal reasonings of the sinful nature that are opposed to God's purpose:

> *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*
>
> *(2 Corinthians 10:4-5)*

Three functions of spiritual weapons in pulling down strongholds are indicated in the above verses. Spiritual warfare…

1. demolishes everything that is opposed to Christ,
2. enables us to take control of our mind-set and thoughts,

3. transforms all that is alien and contrary to God into obedience to Christ.

The war we wage against evil must be fought with spiritual weapons. Through God's Word, we can cast down lies and everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. *"The word of God is living and powerful"* (Hebrews 4:12). It will defeat any argument of the devil.

With EVERY STRONGHOLD, THE DEVIL ATTEMPTS TO KEEP PEOPLE FROM FAITH AND OBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL BECAUSE HE WANTS THEIR HEARTS AS HIS OWN PROPERTY.

The Lord has shown me that part of Satan's methodology is to keep God's people ignorant of His Word. For example, one day, I was sharing with a group of believers about the victory we have in Christ Jesus. I talked about the joy of salvation and the power we have to live the Christian life. Afterward, several people came to me individually and said, "Mary, I know I have power in God, but I just don't know how to appropriate that power." Unfortunately, these believers were typical of many in the church today. However, I rejoiced that I had the answer for them because I had gone through the same experience years ago. I turned to Hosea 4:6 and read to them, *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."*

We can defeat the strongholds of Satan by bringing all our thoughts in line with the mind of Christ. Those who give control of their thought life over to Satan and his lies will harm themselves. Yet, by

submitting to God and His Word, we can capture our whole understanding and dedicate it to obeying Christ. A victorious believer takes as willing captives his thoughts, motives, and intentions. He voluntarily pledges their obedience to Christ. True fulfillment and power to live a victorious Christian life can come only when we are totally submitted to Him.

Satan's power over the believer is limited. The devil is a caged lion that seeks to devour, but he and his demonic forces have only the power God allows them or the authority a man or woman voluntarily gives over to them. We limit Satan's damage by serving God and living righteously before Him.

Only GOD CAN BREAK THE ENEMY'S HOLD ON SOMEONE.

In contrast, Satan often has overwhelming power and influence over unbelievers. I have observed many people who said, "I will never do this," or "I will never do that." Then they contradicted themselves and did exactly what they promised they wouldn't. This is because they are susceptible to the enemy's deceit and temptations. They don't have the power and protection that believers have through God's Spirit.

Anthony Gomez from Brooklyn, New York, shared with me his awesome experience in spiritual warfare. It shows the devil's power over unbelievers and how only God can break the enemy's hold on someone:

> I was with the Latin Kings [a well-known gang] on the mean

streets of New York for several years. I have been very wicked and evil. I took pleasure in hurting people. I have been involved with Santeria, black magic, devil worshiping—I think I've done just about everything.

I've come a long way to where I am now. I can't believe I'm still alive. Once I was kidnapped. When I tried to run I couldn't because I had been beaten so badly. The last time I tried to run, I felt a hand picking me up and throwing me on the highway. Fortunately, a car stopped and the people called the police.

I have read two of your books, and they scared me to death before I turned to God. I've seen demons like the ones you describe—big, hairy bodies, brownish skin, eyes way back, long faces, and so on. I get a lot of dreams and visions. Once I saw little small demons put chains on me.

Then two beings held me and forced me to look at a scene I did not want to see. I felt hands holding me, forcing me to see these things; and I couldn't move. I cried for hours. I was so angry that they held me like that. I wound up in prison in Pennsylvania.

At Greensburg, I got one of your books, and it really put me straight. I thank God for Dr. T. L. Lowery and Mary K. Baxter, and for the work you are doing. You don't know how much you have helped me in this new way of life.

Believers may be tempted, deceived, and accused by Satan. They do not have to yield to these attacks, but if they continue to listen to Satan and turn from God's truth, they can be left with merely human resources, as in the case of unbelievers.

People CAN BE DOMINATED BY DEMONS IN THE SAME WAY SOME WIVES ARE DOMINATED BY ABUSIVE HUSBANDS—TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY LOSE THEIR SENSE OF PERSONAL WORTH AND CONTROL.

When a believer does not resist Satan, he may become entangled so deeply in wrong behavior that he cannot escape it without special prayer and counsel from other believers. It sometimes even alters his personality. A person can be dominated by a demon in the same way some wives are dominated by abusive husbands. It comes to the point where they lose their sense of personal worth and control.

RENOUNCING THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL

Through strongholds, the devil harasses and oppresses people. In order to defeat the enemy's schemes against us, we must reject Satan and all his works. His works are sin, not righteousness. The fruit of his actions produce poverty and lack, not fulfillment and peace. He deals in disease, affliction, and suffering, not healing, health, and wholeness. In Jesus' name, we must renounce all the enemy's empty promises. After prayerfully discerning that a problem is not the result of natural causes, or when the flesh will not respond to spiritual discipline, then you should consciously renounce the strongholds in Jesus' name. Do it specifically. Declare what you are renouncing.

- **Renounce the Occult**: Reject anything that has to do with zodiac signs, clairvoyance, horoscopes, reincarnation, fortune-telling, hypnosis, yoga, transcendental meditation, mind-control, ouija boards, or any other occult practices or superstitions.
- **Renounce False Religion and Doctrine**: Reject false beliefs and doctrine that do not line up with the Word of God and do not recognize the deity and humanity of Christ.
- **Renounce Spiritual Pride and Vanity**: Reject any thought of saving or sustaining yourself through your own abilities or of taking credit for what God has done in your life.
- **Renounce the Spirit of Bondage**: Reject mental and emotional bondage, addictions, compulsions, and sexual

perversions. God will help you break the bonds of pornography, adultery, or homosexuality. Renounce the spirits of lying and confusion. Rebuke all fear, worry, anxiety, and timidity, including the paralyzing fear of death. Memorize and repeat often to yourself this verse: *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind"* (2 Timothy 1:7).

- **Renounce the Spirit of Infirmity**: Rebuke, in Jesus' name, any sickness and pain the devil may be causing in your body. Renounce the spirits of depression, despair, and suicide. It does not matter how long you have been suffering with these things. Remember the woman who had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years but was delivered. (See Luke 13:11.)
- **Renounce the Sins of the Heart**: In Jesus' name, rebuke any works of unforgiveness, jealousy, anger, resentment, bitterness, vengeance, and violence, which the Bible clearly teaches against. They are self-destructive habits that will wreck your life. You can rebuke a spirit of listlessness. You can overcome apathy. Before you can do battle against the enemy, you must release all these works of Satan. We will discuss this point in more detail in a coming chapter.

We must be continually on the alert, for our enemy is persistent. The devil tempted Jesus, but our Lord defeated him with the Word of God. When Satan realized he had lost that round, he went away, but only to regroup and plot his next move: *"Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from* [Jesus] *until an opportune time"* (Luke 4:13). Yet remember that, whenever the devil returned to

tempt Jesus, the Lord overcame Him.

Jesus is the only One who is fully willing and able to deliver us from sin and Satan, and to give us peace. We can rely completely on our Savior. Let us cheerfully and devotedly obey Him from the heart. Let us willingly submit to all His commands and promises. He alone can demolish every stronghold Satan plots to bring against us. [1]

CHAPTER 5

TAKING BACK WHAT SATAN HAS STOLEN

[Jesus] *said, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."*

—John 10:10

Perhaps you are still wondering if the enemy can be defeated or whether you are meant to engage him in battle. There is a portion of Scripture that has been a special blessing in my life in regard to understanding and practicing spiritual warfare. First Samuel 30 gives an account of David taking back what his enemy had stolen from him and the people who were under his leadership. He and his four-hundred-man platoon of guerilla "mighty men" returned to their hometown of Ziklag one day and discovered that the Amalekites had raided and sacked it. These enemies had also kidnapped their families and were holding them captive. Grieving over the devastation they found in Ziklag, David and his men wept until they couldn't weep any longer. Then the men's grief turned to anger against David as their leader, until they were ready to stone him:

Now it happened, when David and his men cameto Ziklag, on the third day, that

the Amalekiteshad invaded the South and...attacked Ziklag andburned it with fire, and had taken captive thewomen and those who were there, from small togreat; they did not kill anyone, but carried themaway and went their way. So David and his mencame to the city, and there it was, burned with fire;and their wives, their sons, and their daughters hadbeen taken captive. Then David and the people whowere with him lifted up their voices and wept, untilthey had no more power to weep....Now David wasgreatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him,because the soul of all the people was grieved, everyman for his sons and his daughters. But Davidstrengthened himself in the LORD his God.

(1 Samuel 30:1-4, 6)

THE ENEMY IS TO BE COMPLETELY DEFEATED

How did David react to this overwhelming situation? First, he strengthened and encouraged himself in the Lord. Then he prayed and asked God whether he should fight back. (See verse 8.) The Lord responded, *"Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all....So David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away....And nothing of theirs was lacking...; David recovered all"* (verses 8, 18-19).

We should note that these events took place near the end of David's wilderness years. He had been running from Saul for about ten years, living in exile under stressful and trying circumstances. We all have wilderness experiences in which we encounter difficulties and trials. These are times that test our faithfulness to God, but they can also be times of spiritual education, if we will allow God to teach us. In addition, they can be times that strengthen the nature of our relationships with God, just as David turned to the Lord for strength and encouragement in his difficulties.

Wilderness EXPERIENCES CAN BE TIMES OF SPIRITUAL EDUCATION IF WE WILL ALLOW GOD TO TEACH US.

Was David successful in getting back what the enemy had stolen? *"David recovered **all** that the Amalekites had carried away"* (verse 18). Not only did he defeat his enemy, but he also got back *everything*

that had been stolen.

Likewise, our spiritual enemy is out to steal from us and ruin us. Jesus called Satan a thief as He warned us, "*The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy*" (John 10:10). The devil does everything he can to rob whatever he can from us—spiritual blessings, physical health, financial resources, effectiveness for the kingdom, peace, and even mental soundness.

Satan has stolen too many things from God's people. We do not need to let this thief come into our lives and the lives of our family members. We must keep the enemy from stealing the resources of our churches, our ministries, and our jobs. It is time for us to show righteous anger and decide we are going to take back what this thief has stolen from us!

JESUS GIVES US HIS AUTHORITY AND POWER

We have already seen how the Old Testament gives us insight into Satan and his activities, through such passages as Satan's arrogance and fall (Isaiah 14:12-17), the temptation and fall of humanity (Genesis 3), and Satan's attack on Job (Job 1-2). Yet the gospel era seems to have been a unique time when spiritual warfare took a decided turn in intensity. Demonic manifestations became more pronounced when Jesus began His ministry. When the Son of God came to the earth, Satan finally realized his ultimate defeat was a certainty. He knew his time to do his evil works was limited. Therefore, demons openly displayed their presence within people and often challenged the authority of the Lord, as well as that of His disciples.

We know, of course, that Satan can do nothing without God's permission. God allowed these things to happen so that, as the Messiah of Israel, Jesus could demonstrate His power and authority over the devil and his demons. Through His mighty works, including subduing and casting out evil spirits, Jesus was declaring that the King had come. God's kingdom of freedom and life was now present on earth because He was present. Jesus' authority over sin, sickness, and Satan was a fulfillment of Scripture. For example, we read,

> *When evening had come, they brought to* [Jesus] *many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick,*

that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses."

(Matthew 8:16-17)

Jesus knew the importance of His coming for spiritual warfare and defeating the enemy:

- He said in John 12:31, *"Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out."*
- He said in John 16:11, *"The ruler of this world is judged."*
- Colossians 2:15 says that Jesus *"disarmed principalities and powers,* [and] *made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it."*
- Hebrews 2:14-15 says that Jesus became flesh and blood so *"that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."*

Jesus said He had *"all authority."* Note that He also gave that same authority to us in His name:

All authority has been given to Me in heaven andon earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all thenations, baptizing them in the name of the Fatherand of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teachingthem to observe all things that I have commandedyou; and lo, I am with you always, even to the endof the age.

(Matthew 28:18-20)

Go into all the world and preach the gospel toevery creature. He who believes and is baptizedwill be saved; but he who does not believe will becondemned. And these signs will follow those whobelieve: In My name they will cast out demons;they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it willby no means hurt them; they will lay hands on thesick, and they will recover.

(Mark 16:15-18)

Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you."

(Luke 10:17-19)

The Bible clearly sets forth Christ's power over the enemy and our victory in Him. We must remember that *all* created beings—whether they are holy or fallen—were created through and for Christ. Therefore, they are naturally under His authority:

For by Him all things were created that are inheaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible,whether thrones or dominions or principalities orpowers. All things were created through Him andfor Him

(Colossians 1:16)

Remember that the powers of evil are twice under Jesus' authority because He totally and publicly defeated them.

Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

(Colossians 2:15)

We must come to fully understand that, when Jesus triumphed over the devil, He released us from our enemy's grip. God wants us to take full advantage of the fact that we are already conquerors over our enemy. Paul wrote, *"We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us"* (Romans 8:37).

God WILL GIVE HIS PEOPLE GREAT BOLDNESS, COURAGE, AND SUPERNATURAL STRENGTH IN FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH.

If we are already *"more than conquerors,"* why does Satan so often continue to get the upper hand with God's people? One way he gets away with stealing from us is that he lies and deceives in order to convince us that he has more power than he actually possesses. He does not want us to understand that Jesus Christ has stripped him of his power over us—and we believe him rather than God! Unfortunately, Satan has taken control of many individuals, groups, cities, and even countries. But as a Christian, you can exercise the authority of the believer over the devil and his works. Some people think that demons are running around wildly, wreaking havoc wherever they go, with nothing to stop them. As spiritual beings, however, they must obey the sovereign God, and He has given His people authority over them in Jesus' name.

In the revelations God has graciously permitted me to have, I have often seen that old serpent, the devil, forced to retreat. I have seen an angel with an open book, brandishing the Word of God like a sword

and making the devil bow down and stop whatever evil he was doing. Many times, I have seen him slink away in defeat from certain people and places.

The Holy Spirit directs strong believers toward the most strategic battles that will help advance God's kingdom and righteousness. Certain battles are not worth fighting, and the Holy Spirit has the ability to guide us to those confrontations that are most strategic.

We CAN TAKE BACK EVERYTHING SATAN HAS STOLEN FROM US AND OUR HOUSEHOLDS.

God will give His people great boldness, courage, and supernatural strength in fighting the good fight of faith. Paul wrote, *"I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me [I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me; I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency]"* (Philippians 4:13 AMP).

God's people need to invade the enemy's camp with all diligence, confidence, and assurance. We can take back everything Satan has stolen from us and our households. It doesn't belong to the devil. He is a thief, and we demand that he give it all back *now!*

PART TWO:

THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE

CHAPTER 6

OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE ARMOR

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

—Ephesians 6:13-17

In the first chapter of Ephesians, Paul taught that, when we come to Christ and trust in Him as our Savior, we are blessed *"with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ"* (verse 3). Later in this chapter, he talked about Christ's power and glory, and the tremendous victory Jesus gave us over sin and Satan.

[Christ is]*far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.*

(Ephesians 1:21-2:2)

As we have been learning, when we come to Christ, it is not just a time of unbelievable blessedness, but it is also a declaration of war. It is the beginning of a struggle with Satan and his forces. The kingdom of heaven within us begins to war against the kingdom of hell. To be effective in this war, we must *"be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might"* (Ephesians 6:10), *"put on the whole armor of God"* (verse 11), and go forth to engage and defeat the enemy.

Yet numerous Christians do not know how to specifically engage in spiritual warfare. For this reason, many try to fight the enemy with inadequate weapons. Bible teacher Diane Dew had a dream or vision about the weapons Christians are meant to use in spiritual warfare:

> *It was just a dream,* I kept telling myself. But I awoke from my sleep alarmed and concerned for the condition of the church. Seldom do I remember a dream so vividly. The impression it made upon me remains to this day.
>
> I stood in the entrance of a very old and musty fortress. It could have been an ancient castle. The air was damp, like a basement kept closed for many years. To the right, a staircase wound around the wall, leading downstairs. No one was in sight, so I proceeded about halfway down the steps. The wall was cold, clammy.
>
> In the lower level was a huge pile of swords of all shapes and sizes. All were rusty from the dampness. None had been used in some time.
>
> *Where is everyone?* I wondered, aloud. "Away at war," the

answer came. My heart skipped a beat.

They can't be doing very well, I thought. *They left without their weapons!* [1]

We are engaged in a real, though unseen, war! It is disastrous for us to go into spiritual battle without our spiritual weapons. We see an illustration of this truth from human warfare during World War II. As Hitler gained total control over Germany, his thirst for power and conquest grew. His army began to march across Europe, taking over more and more territory. As he conquered nation after nation, in some cases, the fight could hardly be called a battle. Some countries' armies made futile efforts with inadequate weapons to try to resist Hitler's technologically equipped troops. They were woefully unprepared for the strength of their enemy's warfare.

Similarly, tragic consequences can occur when we take a complacent attitude toward spiritual warfare and fail to guard against Satan's armory of fierce weapons. Just as a nation must prepare and build up its resources in order to wage a physical war, believers must arm themselves against the onslaught of Satan and his demons. Sometimes, Christians forget they have an enemy. But Satan, ever watchful for an opening, waits to attack not only you, but your family as well. You must protect yourself and your home from his destructive powers.

Just AS A NATION MUST PREPARE AND BUILD UP ITS RESOURCES IN ORDER TO WAGE A PHYSICAL WAR, BELIEVERS MUST ARM THEMSELVES AGAINST THE ONSLAUGHT OF SATAN AND HIS DEMONS.

In warfare, going into the enemy's territory is dangerous and risky. However, God does not send us into the devil's territory unequipped and on our own. Instead, He gives us the necessary armor and equipment to protect ourselves against the attacks that are sure to come.

In his book, *The Weapons of Your Warfare* , Larry Lea provided us with a weapons manifest, or list, of some spiritual arms available to the believer for spiritual warfare. He emphasized that God's storehouse of spiritual weapons includes the following:

1. The blood of Jesus
2. Prayer
3. The whole armor of God
4. Praise
5. Speaking the Word
6. The name of Jesus
7. Perseverance[2]

Our authority over Satan can be expressed by "pleading the blood" of Jesus, praising the Lord, reading the Bible aloud, breaking the enemy's power in Jesus' name, and many other ways. Although the above list is very helpful, keep in mind that it is not an exhaustive one. As you pray, read the Word of God, and rely on the Lord, He will bring to your mind other spiritual weapons. These are just some of the things Satan cannot stand against.

Timing IS EVERYTHING WHEN YOU ARE ENGAGED IN

WARFARE.

When we see how varied the weapons are, we begin to realize that they must be used properly. Some should be used only during hand-to-hand combat. Others can be used in sophisticated offensive maneuvers, but only when the Commander in Chief gives explicit orders to do so. Timing is everything when you are engaged in warfare.

It takes a thoroughly trained, experienced, and purposefully armored soldier to see a spiritual battle all the way through to victory. I wonder how many combat veterans would be able to tell you stories of fallen soldiers who became complacent after they had been around the battlefield for a while, and who let down their guards. In a similar way, in the realm of the spiritual, many have been "wounded" or "killed" because they thought that, since they had made it so far, the rest of the way would be easy. The Christian cannot survive unless he puts on the whole armor of God. When we follow God's directives for spiritual warfare, we will not put ourselves at unnecessary risk.

When we go into spiritual battle, we fight with weapons that are not of this world. The following are biblical instructions for spiritual warfare, using the analogy of physical armor that was familiar to the first-century world. May God grant us the wisdom and ability to apply them in our spiritual battles.

THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:10-11:

> *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

You may think that armor is an ancient term that was relevant only for ancient people. The uniforms of soldiers may now be different from what they were in biblical times, and the equipment they use may be different. Still, a soldier going into battle must be properly equipped, and the principles of protection and weaponry that the *"armor of God"* represents still apply to us today.

Spiritual armor protects and reinforces the Christian as he or she engages in spiritual warfare. The pieces of equipment are of both an offensive and defensive nature. Note that Paul said we are to put on the *"whole"* armor. We must pay attention to *all* the pieces of spiritual equipment available to us so that (1) we will be able to effectively wage an offensive campaign against the forces of evil, and (2) we will not have any weak places in our lives through which the enemy can attack us. Although I have categorized the weaponry into offensive and defensive armor, you will notice that there is some overlap between the two.

OFFENSIVE ARMOR

The Belt of Truth

God once showed me a revelation of a man putting on spiritual armor. The first piece of armor I saw was a wide belt that glowed with a brilliant light and seemed to be as tough as steel. I immediately remembered that the apostle Paul said, *"Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth"* (Ephesians 6:14). An ancient soldier's first step in putting on his armor was to secure a wide belt around his waist, which served as a place to hang the scabbard or sheath that held his sword.

The belt could also be used to tuck in loose clothing that might otherwise hinder or trip the soldier. For example, with the loose clothing tied up, the enemy did not have something that would be easy to grab. Such a belt was used not only by the military of the day, but also by people who were working or getting ready for extensive travel. They would gather up their long robes and tuck them in a belt or waist sash. This freed their legs for unhindered movement.

One of the spiritual applications is that, before we can put on the full armor of God, we must bind up the things that hinder us. We must maintain a life of integrity so that we will have a basis from which we can effectively use the sword of the Spirit—the Word of God. A commitment to truth removes spiritual hindrances from our lives and gives us the freedom of movement in the kingdom of God that we need for battle.

In our age of relativism, we may forget how much God values, honors, and requires truth. Psalm 51:6 says, *"You* [God] *desire truth*

in the inward parts." Jesus said, *"I tell you the truth,"* seventy-nine times in the four Gospels (NIV). Other translations use this phrase or similar phrases. Our Lord also said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14:6).

When WE GO INTO SPIRITUAL BATTLE, WE FIGHT WITH WEAPONS THAT ARE NOT OF THIS WORLD.

Jesus demonstrated that He was the truth in two ways: by what He said and by what He did. Read the words He spoke. Even His enemies recognized the veracity of His statements, such as when the Roman soldiers declared, *"No man ever spoke like this Man!"* (John 7:46). No one has spoken words of truth, wisdom, and life as Jesus has—not the ancient philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato, and Virgil, and not even religious leaders, such as Buddha or Muhammad. Pilate confessed, *"I find no fault in Him at all"* (John 18:38).

Jesus spoke gracious utterances that offered humanity full pardon, peace, and reconciliation through the sacrifice of His blood. He offered eternal life as God's free gift to those who received Him and His words. Jesus' sweet words of truth continue to lift and liberate lost sinners.

Jesus also demonstrated the truth by what He did. The New Testament is an amazing account of the mighty deeds and historic events of Jesus' life. What He said was reliable and accurate. His predictions about Himself were fulfilled just as He said. His actions were always in accordance with the nature and Word of God. He said He came to free the captives, and He invaded the realm of the satanic underworld, delivering men and women from bondage. He stalked into

the lair of Satan himself and defeated death.

As followers of Jesus, we also must live lives of integrity. We have been given the truth in Jesus; and when we wear it as the foundation of our armor, God will use it to cause us to make a difference in our world. People often have to see the truth in us before they will believe what we say about God's Word. A lack of integrity will hinder your spiritual movement at every turn.

God's instructions for the Israelites' first Passover meal were the following:

> *They shall take some of the blood* [of the sacrificial lamb] *and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it....You shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover.*
>
> *(Exodus 12:7-8, 11)*

Here is how I apply this passage to spiritual armor, particularly the belt of truth: When we come to God in faith, He applies the blood of the Lamb of God to our hearts, and His blood cleanses us from sin. He then expects us to immediately be prepared to move out of the old way of doing things and into new life in Jesus Christ.

When we put on the belt of truth, we are saying to God and to the world that we have no time for anything that would delay, hinder, or get in the way of the life God wants us to lead. *"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ"* (1

Peter 1:13). We need to gather up the loose ends of our lives and the things that cause us to stumble and place them under the control of God's Spirit, in accordance with God's Word. As we read earlier, we are to "[cast] *down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Jesus' WORDS OF TRUTH CONTINUE TO LIFT AND LIBERATE LOST SINNERS.

The Sword of the Spirit

Although not next in order in the list of spiritual armor in Ephesians, let us now look at the sword of the Spirit, since the sword is attached to the belt in our armor analogy.

"Take the…sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). A soldier is not completely armed unless he has a weapon with which to defend himself. Yet the Lord impressed on my heart that there can be no effective defense without a good offense. The sword was not just used as a defensive weapon with which to protect oneself; it was also an offensive weapon with which to destroy an opponent or enemy. In Paul's time, the sword was the main weapon of warfare. Similarly, the Word of God is the primary weapon of offense we use in spiritual warfare today.

The Roman short sword had a double-edged blade and was designed for close-quarter, one-on-one fighting. A soldier had to spend many years learning to use it effectively. The well-trained soldiers of Rome were able to conquer most of the known world using these unique weapons.

The WORD OF GOD IS THE PRIMARY WEAPON WE USE IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE TODAY.

If we are going to destroy the works of Satan, we must learn to use our unique sword—the Word of God. *"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a*

discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). Note, too, that the Bible refers to Jesus, the Living Word, as having a double-edged sword: *"He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength"* (Revelation 1:16).

To use God's Word in spiritual warfare, we must study it diligently. No good soldier would ever go into battle without having learned how to use his weapons. As we are trained through our study of the Bible, we learn to use the power of the Word, through the Holy Spirit, to demolish the strongholds that have existed in our lives. The Word enables us to take captive every thought we have and make it obedient to His truth.

The Word came through the Holy Spirit and is brought to our minds by the Holy Spirit:

> *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful forteaching, rebuking, correcting and training inrighteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughlyequipped for every good work.*
>
> *(2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV)*

> [Jesus said,]*"When He, the Spirit of truth, hascome, He will guide you into all truth; for He willnot speak on His own authority, but whatever Hehears He will speak; and He will tell you things tocome. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."*
>
> *(John 16:13-14)*

The Greek term for *"word"* in Ephesians 6:17 is not the more

familiar *logos*, but *rhema* .[3] This seems to indicate specific application of the Word. The "sword," the Word of God, is attached to the "belt," or the truth of God. We might consider the sword to be the immediate word of God and the belt to be the "stored" or written Word. The specific word is drawn from the stored Word. We must study and know the written Word of God so that we will be ready when the Holy Spirit desires to give us a specific word that we are to apply to our present circumstances. Thus, we must take the sword of the Spirit firmly in hand in both offensive and defensive warfare.

The Preparation of the Gospel of Peace

Let's look next at our spiritual "shoes." Paul wrote, *"Having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace"* (Ephesians 6:15). Our walk with God requires us to have proper footwear, which, like the sword, can be considered both offensive and defensive in nature. Through our spiritual shoes, we prepare to do battle and are protected from the sharp attacks with which the enemy tries to make us stumble.

> Our PREPARATION WILL DETERMINE THE ABILITY AND THE STABILITY OF OUR WALK WITH CHRIST.

The only way to be prepared to walk through the wilderness of this world as we progress in our life's journey, the only way to be ready to wage spiritual warfare, is to be equipped with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our preparation will determine the ability and the stability of our walk with Christ.

> *Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*
> *(1 Peter 3:15 NIV)*

The shoes of the gospel of peace will never wear thin, just as the Israelites' shoes never wore out during forty years in the desert because God kept them whole. Putting on the proper footwear in spiritual warfare is an act of security for the future; it is trusting

God's promise of deliverance and eternal life. His gospel is a gospel of peace, and we know that we are involved in a war whose victory is assured, and whose peace will be won forever.

This footwear also indicates that, as soldiers, we are part of the peace delegation that is being sent to those who are currently fighting on the side of Satan. Remember that, even though other people can seem like soldiers of the enemy, they are also being held captive by him to do his will. (See 2 Timothy 2:24-26.) We can proclaim the message that we serve a gracious King who desires that they live in His kingdom and receive all the benefits and blessings of His children. Isaiah 52:7 says, *"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation,"* and Paul wrote, *"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God"* (2 Corinthians 5:20).

The Breastplate of Righteousness

Another piece of equipment I saw in the revelation of God's armor looked like a bulletproof vest. This is what Paul referred to as the *"breastplate of righteousness"* (Ephesians 6:14). The Roman breastplate was a sleeveless, vest-like piece of flexible metal plate that stretched from the shoulder to the hip. It was backed with a piece of tough cowhide. This piece of armor protected the vital organs of the chest—notably the lungs and heart.

Physically, our lungs enable us to breathe in oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide so that we will have purer air to live on. Similarly, we are to protect our spiritual lungs so that we can freely take in a pure flow of the life of the Holy Spirit and live through Him. Too many Christians are struggling to work for God in their own strength and power.

The heart is the center of our physical lives, and as far as our spiritual lives are concerned, it is the core of our spiritual experience. The heart provides the motivation for all we do. If the heart is damaged, we will be thwarted in our motivation for spiritual things. Our desires and interests will be diverted from God's purposes.

When GOD THE FATHER LOOKS AT US, HE SEES US AS RIGHTEOUS BECAUSE WE ARE WEARING THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF HIS PERFECT SON.

If you wear the bulletproof vest of God's righteousness, however, you can ensure that your heart and emotions are securely guarded and

adequately protected against attack. When we count on our own righteousness, we often begin to feel unworthy of God, or that we have failed in the Christian life and God will surely reject us. The enemy builds on this sense of unworthiness because his aim is to make us think that God has not really forgiven our sins. He wants us to forget that it is not our own righteousness that counts, but Christ's righteousness in us. This is simply the devil's means of opposing and destroying what God intends to do through believers who put their trust in His forgiveness and power.

Again, when we come to Jesus Christ and accept Him as Lord and Savior, our sins are forgiven, and we are granted the very righteousness of Christ Himself. The Greek word for "putting on" the breastplate of righteousness means "to clothe or be clothed with (in the sense of sinking into a garment)."[4] Jesus clothes us with the garment of His righteousness. In this sense, we don't so much put it on as allow it to be placed on us. To use the metaphor of "sinking into a garment," such as a robe, we lift up our hands to receive God's grace, and it flows over our heads and then covers our whole selves. When God the Father looks at us, He sees us as righteous because we are wearing the righteousness of His perfect Son.

> *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.*
>
> *(Isaiah 61:10)*

[God] *made* [Jesus] *who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

(2 Corinthians 5:21)

You cannot stand on your own merits. You have to come to Christ on the grounds of His imputed righteousness. I believe that, no matter what the circumstances, Paul knew he was secure in Christ because he had *"put on the breastplate of righteousness"* (Ephesians 6:14), which would deflect any weapon or ammunition with which the enemy would assault him.

The only righteousness worth anything in the eyes of God is the righteousness of Jesus. The only way in which God can look on us as righteous is when He sees us in Christ, clothed in the garments of His righteousness. We must discard any robes of self-righteousness and put on the protective breastplate of the righteousness of Christ.

We need this protection because, again, the devil will try to cause us to become discouraged and depressed. He uses every wicked device he has in order to attack our hearts and emotions. He attacks Christians with confusion, doubt, uncertainty, strife, discord, and arguments. He tries to get us to feel sorry for ourselves. He tries to get us to doubt the love of God. One of his favorite schemes is to attack us with a spirit of indifference, cynicism, callousness, coldness, and bitterness toward one another and God. He approaches us through our circumstances, our feelings, and our thought life.

We MUST BE SURE TO GUARD OUR EMOTIONS, AS THEY CAN OFTEN GIVE THE DEVIL AN ENTRY INTO

We must be sure to guard our emotions, as they can often give the devil an entry into our lives. The fourth chapter of Ephesians gives us an example of the relationship between our emotions and spiritual warfare:

> *"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.*
>
> *(Ephesians 4:26-27)*

Failing to control your anger grants the devil an opportunity to get a foothold in your life. Then he can use it as a base of operations to launch more spiritual attacks against you. Many Christians are suffering today because of anger that has not been resolved. Still, anger is just one of many human emotions. If Satan can get a grip on our feelings, he can destroy our ability to function by crippling us emotionally or leading us into all manner of destructive and addictive behavior.

God has shown me many people who are wounded in soul and spirit. As I look into their faces, I can see the results of Satan's attacks on them. This doesn't mean they were necessarily doing something really *bad* in their lives, but that they listened to the wrong voice, and it resulted in wrong and ultimately painful choices.

Jesus protects us with an impenetrable vest against anything the devil may throw at us. Knowing that we are covered by the righteousness of Christ will guard our hearts and emotions and enable us to live the Christian life with security and joy regardless of the

attacks of Satan. When we get weary in the battle, we must remind ourselves that Christ is the Truth, and that He is our righteousness.

The Shield of Faith

"Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts [*"flaming arrows,"* NIV] *of the wicked one"* (Ephesians 6:16). The shield of a Roman soldier was several feet in height and was carried with one hand. It would protect him from an onslaught of rocks and flaming arrows. The shield was also used to ward off the blows of an enemy's sword. In addition, it enabled the Roman soldier to get near to an enemy soldier so that his short sword could be effectively used, while the enemy's longer sword would be useless in such close quarters. Similarly, our *"shield of faith"* can ward off the *"flaming arrows"* and other assaults of the evil one while enabling us to effectively counterattack using the sword of the Spirit.

It is of the utmost importance that we take this shield with us wherever we go because *"it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him"* (Hebrews 11:6 NLT). The faith that will deflect and extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one is simply trust in God. We must live a life of faith, *"for in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'"* (Romans 1:17 NIV).

The FAITH THAT WILL DEFLECT AND EXTINGUISH THE FLAMING ARROWS OF THE EVIL ONE IS SIMPLY

TRUST IN GOD.

The word Paul used for *"shield"* in Ephesians 6:16 is *thureos,* which refers to "a large shield."[5] Since a Roman shield covered much of the soldier, it also covered the other pieces of his armor. In a similar way, there is a connection between the shield of faith and all the other pieces of armor for spiritual warfare. Let's examine some of those connections.

When Paul referred to *"faith"* in Ephesians, he was speaking of faith in Christ. The Scripture says that *"faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17). By faith, we who believe in Jesus through the testimony of the Word are "in Him." Paul used the phrase *"in Christ"* twelve times in the first three chapters of the book. An understanding of our position in Christ through faith renders all of Satan's lies ineffective; all the pieces of armor mentioned in Ephesians 6, as well as our prayers, involve aspects of our being in Him:

- *Belt of Truth*: The truth is in Christ. (See, for example, Ephesians 4:21.)
- *Breastplate of Righteousness*: We are righteous in Christ. (See, for example, Romans 3:22.)
- *Feet Shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace*: We have peace with God in Christ. (See Romans 5:1.)
- *Helmet of Salvation*: We will spend eternity with God in Christ. (See, for example, Ephesians 2:6- 7.)
- *Sword of the Spirit*: We apply the Word of God in Christ. (See, for example, 2 Corinthians 5:19.)

- *Praying Always:* We have access to God the Father through Christ. (See, for example, Ephesians 3:11- 12.)

If you understand the implications of being in Christ through faith, you will be able to *"extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one"* (Ephesians 6:16 NASB). Again, the imagery here is of flaming arrows launched with the intention of starting a destructive fire—a fire that quickly spreads out of control. This is a vivid metaphor for Satan's lies. With his deception, he attempts to light fires in our minds by impressing on us an incendiary idea that can ignite a series of destructive thoughts. This causes our imaginations, our impressions, and our questions to run wild. Moreover, this wildfire of the mind feeds on fear. *"Your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Peter 5:8). A lion roars to intimidate its rivals and to paralyze its prey with dread.

For example, worries about the future can rage out of control if we don't believe that God is both all knowing and good. Fear of being hurt emotionally consumes us if we don't believe that God will meet our relational needs. However, if we understand the truth of our position in Jesus and bring "*every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"* (2 Corinthians 10:5), we can recognize such fears as invalid, since they are based on false ideas.

F ear OF BEING HURT EMOTIONALLY CONSUMES US IF WE DON'T BELIEVE THAT GOD WILL MEET OUR RELATIONAL NEEDS.

Note that there is also a strong connection between faith and

recognizing our position of being righteous in Christ (which enables us to wear the breastplate of righteousness.) In fact, in 1 Thessalonians 5:8, Paul said we are to put on the "*breastplate of faith and love."* Faith in Christ leads to Christ's righteousness being imputed to us, so that we no longer need to fear, but are *"made perfect in love"* (1 John 4:18).

The Helmet of Salvation

"And take the helmet of salvation," Paul said in Ephesians 6:17. In 1 Thessalonians 5:8, he referred to this same headpiece as *"the hope of salvation."* This piece of armor concerns our eternal destiny and our assurance of salvation. Again, the enemy often calls into question the level of our loyalty and commitment to God. He tries his best to cause us to doubt our safekeeping in Christ. As a result, we can be paralyzed by fear and insecurity.

If Satan is unsuccessful at causing us to doubt our salvation, then he'll attempt to convince us to downplay its importance. He doesn't want us to live with an eternal perspective in mind, but a worldly one. He wants us to be caught up in temporal things so that we won't spend time waging warfare against the powers of evil and on behalf of those who are lost.

There IS A STRONG CONNECTION BETWEEN FAITH AND RECOGNIZING OUR POSITION OF BEING RIGHTEOUS IN CHRIST.

How are we to "take" the helmet of salvation? The Greek word for *"take"* means to "accept, receive."[6] This provides an image of someone handing a helmet to a soldier for him to put on, or of a helmet being placed on a soldier. Similarly, we have to accept and receive salvation through Christ; He bestows his salvation on us. As Psalm 149:4 says, *"He crowns the humble with salvation"* (NIV).

The helmet of salvation protects the head, shielding it from deception and accusation. In addition, the head houses the brain. Our brains make decisions concerning how the rest of our bodies are going to operate. They are in charge of what we speak and how we speak it. They control what we listen to, as well as what we think. They enable us to experience emotions. Our minds are what we use to form positive or negative perceptions about other people, and to decide what we will or will not be content with.

Your mind is your consciousness. In this sense, it is *you*, and therefore it determines your future. With it, you make crucial decisions concerning your life's direction and destiny.

The Lord once brought to my mind a Scripture, which I immediately looked up. It says, *"We all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others"* (Ephesians 2:3). I came to realize this means that we followed the sinful desires of our bodies and of our minds. We did what we felt like doing. We responded to so-called natural stimuli. We were under the direction of Satan and were, by nature, children of wrath, just as the rest of mankind is.

But now that we have been changed by Christ, we no longer live in that way. As children of the King, we follow the Prince of our Salvation as He leads us in warfare against the prince of darkness. When we put on the helmet of salvation, we receive the *"mind of Christ"* (1 Corinthians 2:16), and we are to renew our minds according to God's Word, through the Holy Spirit. In this way, our thoughts, actions, and words will be based only on God's thoughts

and ways, for the purpose of glorifying Him. Jesus prayed to the Father regarding His disciples, *"Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth"* (John 17:17).

The Word accurately describes God as good, loving, kind, patient, and trustworthy. In contrast, Satan—just as he did to our first parents in the Garden of Eden—tries to convince us that God desires to withhold good from us and is not looking out for our best interests. He sometimes goes so far as to convince people that God's good gifts, such as marriage and certain foods, are bad. (See 1 Timothy 4:1-7.)

If we believe that God is good, however, we have nothing to fear. If God is good, we can be liberated from the self-defeating hell of worry, anxiety, and panic that we have created for ourselves—with a lot of help from our enemy and his forces of evil. The power of God will sustain us. The Bible says that we are *"kept by the power of God through faith for salvation"* (1 Peter 1:5).

God's PEOPLE SHOULD NOT BELIEVE IN RETREAT BECAUSE CHRIST HAS ALREADY WON THE VICTORY!

Without the helmet of salvation securely on your head every day; without a focus on your future that is based on your redemption, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of eternity with God, you can only fall back on the world's system and culture to help you make important decisions. This will inevitably cause you to stumble into the deception of the enemy. *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death"* (Proverbs 14:12).

Praying Always

After describing the specific pieces of spiritual armor, Paul concluded, *"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints"* (Ephesians 6:18). He revealed that the practice of prayer completes the whole armor of God. We will discuss this crucial spiritual weapon in a coming chapter, so that we may examine it more fully.

No Retreat

In the pieces of armor we have just discussed, have you noticed that there is one area of the soldier's body that is left unprotected? The armor wasn't designed to cover his *back*; Roman soldiers gave no thought to covering their backs because they did not believe in retreat!

Likewise, God's people should not believe in retreat because Christ has already won the victory! Thus, we see that we must take up the whole armor of God and *go forth* to spiritual battle. Sometimes, Satan will come with a full-scale frontal assault; sometimes he will choose guerilla warfare. This is why all the pieces of our armor must be utilized and cared for. We must ensure that they aren't laid aside, taken away, or knocked off by a wrong attitude or by apathy toward the very real warfare in which we are engaged.

Let us move forward, fully protected by the armor that God has provided for us. As Paul said, *"Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 3:13-14).

CHAPTER 7

THE LIFESTYLE OF A SPIRITUAL WARRIOR

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

—Galatians 2:20

Spiritual warfare is a lifestyle, not just an occasional event of rebuking the enemy or casting out demons. The believer must be spiritually prepared at all times. He must understand that since the enemy is continually on the prowl seeking whom he may devour, he must maintain an ongoing *warrior's awareness* of the spiritual battle that constantly rages around him. This understanding must become a natural part of the life of a follower of Christ.

Spiritual warfare requires us to be spiritually on guard because skirmishes can take place even on the inner battlefields of our own minds and hearts. We battle not only the world and the devil, but also our sinful nature, which desires what is contrary to God. The apostle Paul reminded us of this truth:

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal butmighty in God for pulling down strongholds, castingdown arguments and every high thing thatexalts itself against the knowledge of God, ***bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ****.*

(2 Corinthians 10:4-5, emphasis added)

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

(Romans 12:2, emphasis added)

N one OF US CAN CLAIM TO BE FREE FROM THE BATTLE WITH THE SINFUL NATURE JUST BECAUSE WE DON'T STRUGGLE WITH THE "LARGER" SINS.

Many of us are holding on to false mind-sets and even destructive attitudes that do not belong in a child of God, without realizing that they weaken us spiritually. In fact, holding on to them hinders our relationships with God, gives the devil a foothold in our lives, and decreases our effectiveness in spiritual warfare. In addition, Satan seeks ways to encourage and provoke the sinful nature in our lives. He would like us to be dominated by sinful desires, such as the following:

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexualimmorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatryand witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits ofrage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warnyou, as I did before, that those who live like this willnot inherit the kingdom of God.

(Galatians 5:19-21 NIV)

Notice that the acts of the sinful nature include such things as anger, jealousy, and selfish ambition, as well as sexual immorality and witchcraft. None of us can claim to be free from this battle just because we don't struggle with the "larger" sins. Let us look more closely at our war with the sinful nature so that we can increase our understanding of how to deal with it effectively.

WHAT IS THE SINFUL NATURE?

The primary characteristic of the sinful nature is that it is always trying to please itself, disregarding everyone else, including God. Living for yourself is a very easy trap to fall into. Outwardly, a person may appear to be living for God. Inwardly, however, he may be indulging in the sinful nature. Many people, working in the energy of the sinful nature, may even perform good deeds. They make themselves look good, but their inner motives are always aimed at advancing self. In effect, they are relying on their good deeds for their salvation, rather than on forgiveness through Christ. This is true even of some who appear to be waging spiritual warfare. Jesus warned,

> *By their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"*
>
> *(Matthew 7:20-23)*

Inwardly indulging in the sinful nature may seem harmless, but Paul said that it leads to spiritual death. In the following passage, he described the results of living by the sinful nature:

> *Letting your sinful nature control your mind leadsto death. But letting the Spirit control your mindleads to life and peace. For the sinful nature isalways*

hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

(Romans 8:6-8 NLT)

HOW DOES THE SINFUL NATURE OPERATE?

Let's look now at how the sinful nature operates. To do this, we must understand how human beings were originally designed, and how this design became distorted when mankind rebelled against God.

God CREATED MANKIND WITH THREE PARTS: SPIRIT, SOUL, AND BODY.

Spirit

The Bible says, "***God is Spirit**, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth* (John 4:24, emphasis added). It also says that mankind was created in the image of God. (See Genesis 1:26-27.) As God is Spirit, He created man as a spiritual being. Man was designed to communicate with and worship God through his spirit.

Soul

Mankind was also given a soul, which was created as the site of man's consciousness and as the expression of his personality. The soul is made up of the mind, the emotions, and the will. It connects the spiritual and physical aspects of man's nature.

Body

The body was created as the physical "house" in which man was to dwell and through which he was to interact with the physical world through his senses.

Adam and Eve were the first human beings whom God created. Originally, their spiritual nature was totally yielded to God's Spirit (the Holy Spirit) as they lived their lives, made decisions, and took care of the earth. Their spirits were the dominant aspect of their nature as they directed their souls and bodies to think and act in ways that pleased God. In this way, the three parts of their nature—spirit, soul, and body—functioned in harmony with one another.

However, Adam and Eve eventually rejected God's Word and the Holy Spirit's authority and instead followed the word of Satan. The result was that they became spiritually dead and lost the harmony with God and themselves in which they were intended to live. Because of their rebellion against God, their nature became corrupt, or sinful, and so sin entered the world. Since Adam and Eve were spiritually dead, their minds and bodies were no longer being directed by what God's Spirit desired; instead, they became dominated by the sinful nature and its passions. The same domination by sin is true of all people, if they have not been forgiven through the blood of Christ, which He shed on the cross.

The SOUL OF EVERY FALLEN HUMAN BEING IS REDUCED TO BEING A FOLLOWER OF ITS SINFUL

INCLINATIONS AND SATAN'S SCHEMES.

Tragically, the soul of every fallen human being is reduced to being a follower of its sinful inclinations and Satan's schemes, both of which are opposed to God and His nature. The spirit of fallen man is dead, and the soul of every person who hasn't received forgiveness through Christ is now under the power of his own uncontrolled, ungodly desires. Paul wrote about this terrible state:

> *We all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of ourflesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of themind, and were by nature children of wrath, justas the others.*
>
> *(Ephesians 2:3)*

To add to mankind's predicament, Satan knows people's weaknesses as fallen human beings, and he is continually tempting them to disobey God and indulge in every kind of sin against Him. So, not only did the enemy incite man to sin, but he also continues to promote sin in mankind.

Praise God that this is not the end of the story! The good news is that, when we receive salvation through Jesus Christ, our spirits are made alive again, as Paul wrote,

> *You He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.*
>
> *(Ephesians 2:1)*

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ.

(Colossians 2:13 NIV)

When our spirits are made alive, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us, and we are able to yield to God's Spirit once more. Our spiritual rebirth through Jesus Christ enables God's nature to be the dominant influence in our lives again rather than the sinful nature. The Bible says,

Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

(Romans 13:14 NIV)

SPIRITUAL CIVIL WAR

The above verse refers to an entire change of mind-set. We're not even to think about ways to indulge in the sinful nature. Yet we must be aware that this evil nature still continually seeks to surface in the lives of Christians. Until we go to be with Christ, or until He returns to the earth, we will need to be on guard against the sinful nature. It fights against the Spirit of God within us; it still wants to gratify its desires. However, we can have the Holy Spirit living within us, and He wants us to live in a way that pleases God. Spiritual warfare is needed to win each battle with the sinful nature, and the Holy Spirit living within us gives us the power to overcome every evil desire and inclination.

The following scenario is an example of the battle between the sinful nature and God's Spirit in the life of a Christian, and how our spirits, souls, and bodies are involved in the conflict:

1. Through the bodily senses, a person sees, hears, tastes, smells, and touches the world around him.
2. The sinful nature, through the senses, can be stimulated to desire certain forbidden things or experiences that are contrary to God's wishes, and our emotions can be affected by these desires.
3. The mind, or the mental part of man, evaluates, *Is this desire good or evil according to God's Word? Is it productive or nonproductive? Will it help me or hurt me in the long run?*

Jesus said that when we receive the Holy Spirit, *"He will guide* [us] *into all truth"* (John 16:13). Believers have the witness of the Holy Spirit within them, as well as the Bible, to enable them to discern what is right.

4. The will must then make a decision. It must decide whether to obey the Spirit and therefore remain united with God and His purposes—or listen to the sinful nature and yield to temptation, choosing what is hostile to God.

Because of the ongoing conflict between the sinful nature and God's Spirit within us, each believer is, in effect, a walking "civil war." As ungodly thoughts and desires come up, we must learn to "[cast] *down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"* (2 Corinthians 10:5). We do this by living by the Spirit and not for our selfish desires. *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God"* (Romans 8:14).

We CANNOT "PEACEFULLY COEXIST" WITH THE SINFUL NATURE.

LIVING BY THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:16-18 says,

> *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.* (NIV)

Here is how the *New Living Translation* expresses the same passage:

> *So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.*

We have to be thoroughly convinced that what the sinful nature wants and what the Holy Spirit wants are totally opposite. We cannot "peacefully coexist" with the sinful nature. It is our enemy; it will lead us to our deaths, spiritually, if we let it be the ruler of our lives.

The Bible warns us about being sinfully minded rather than spiritually minded:

The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.

(Romans 8:6 NIV)

Do not love the world or anything in the world. Ifanyone loves the world, the love of the Father is notin him. For everything in the world—the cravingsof sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting ofwhat he has and does—comes not from the Fatherbut from the world.

(1 John 2:15-17 NIV)

It is only by the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit that we can live as God wants us to, as these Scriptures testify:

The natural [unregenerate]*man does not receivethe things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishnessto him; nor can he know them, because theyare spiritually discerned.*

(1 Corinthians 2:14)

[Jesus said,] *"He who believes in Me, as the Scripturehas said, out of his heart will flow rivers of livingwater." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive.*

(John 7:37-39)

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

(Acts 1:8)

Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.
(Galatians 5:16)

In Romans 8:3, Paul explained how we overcome the sinful nature: *"For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering"* (NIV). In other words, God gave the law of Moses to the Israelites, which provided God's commandments and instructions for righteous living. The law is good, but without the Spirit's help, we continually yield to the temptation to do what is wrong instead of what is right. God gave the law to convince and remind us of our inability to do what is right, so that we would see our need and turn to Him for help.

Only BY THE POWER AND GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN WE LIVE AS GOD WANTS US TO.

God the Father put into effect a different plan to save us and enable us to live righteously. He sent His own Son Jesus Christ to earth in a physical, human body that was like ours, except that He was without sin. Jesus did what no one else could do: He lived on earth in perfect obedience to God the Father, and then He died on the cross as our Substitute, taking our sins on Himself so that we wouldn't have to be punished for them. God made those who love

Him and receive His offer of forgiveness and restoration through Christ spiritually alive. Then He sent His Spirit to live within them. In this way, God destroyed the sinful nature's control over us. He did this so that we would no longer have to *"live according to the sinful nature but* [could live] *according to the Spirit"* (verse 4 NIV). Galatians 5:24 says, *"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires"* (NIV). Living by the Spirit means living in obedience to the Father, just as Christ did.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SPIRITUALLY MINDED

Therefore, to be spiritually minded means to be occupied with what the Holy Spirit desires and not live under the influence of the sinful nature and its corrupt passions. To be spiritually minded is to make pleasing God and living by His Spirit our major aim and objective in life. It means to be supremely devoted to fulfilling God's will. It means to follow the leading of the Spirit and to obey the Word of God.

Being spiritually minded enables us to put on the whole armor of God that is so necessary for spiritual warfare. It enables us to live in the fullness of our salvation, full of faith and strong in the knowledge of God and His Word. In this way, we can deflect both the attacks of the enemy and the temptations of the sinful nature.

If we are committed to Jesus, and if we are willing to continually renounce and repent of our sins so that we have a clear relationship with God, then we can have authority over Satan. We can command the devil to leave in the name of Jesus. Our enemy can be stubborn, and at times he may seem to delay his departure. However, we are assured that he *must* leave as we yield to God and exercise His authority over the enemy. James 4:7 says, *"Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."*

VICTORY OVER THE SINFUL NATURE

Unfortunately, too many Christians have allowed themselves to be weakened and defeated by yielding to the sinful nature and neglecting to live by the Spirit. They have been rendered powerless and ineffective in spiritual warfare. Please understand that it is difficult, if not impossible, to win this war against the enemy of our souls without learning to overcome the sinful nature.

> *For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*
>
> *(Romans 8:13)*

> *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*
>
> *(Galatians 2:20)*

The sinful nature can be dangerously subtle. Just when you think your spiritual life is going well, and that the war with your old nature is over, you need to watch out for a sneak attack on the perimeter of your life. In 1 Corinthians 10:12, Paul warned about becoming overconfident: *"If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall"* (NLT). Remember that, as a devouring enemy, Satan will try to

prey on the weakness of our sinful nature and incite it.

In physical warfare, the infantry often calls in the superior firepower of the air force with its guided missiles and fighter jets to demoralize the enemy for the decisive assault. Likewise, you have superior power over the sinful nature through the power of prayer, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit. This superior power enables you to prepare for decisive assaults on areas of the sinful nature that you need to conquer.

As we live the lifestyle of a spiritual warrior, we can also counteract the desires of the old nature by bearing fruit for God wherever we have been planted. How can you produce the fruit of the Spirit in your life? Recognize the things of the world that pull you away from God, and the things of the Spirit that draw you toward God. Learn to avoid the traps and minefields of the sinful nature. You can overcome them as long as you allow the Holy Spirit to guide and control your desires.

You HAVE SUPERIOR POWER OVER THE SINFUL NATURE THROUGH THE POWER OF PRAYER, THE WORD OF GOD, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.

It may not always feel good to do battle with the sinful nature. Yet when we follow Christ, our Captain, we begin to bear the fruit of righteousness, which enables us to wage spiritual warfare even more effectively.

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained

by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.
(Hebrews 12:11-13 NIV)

Your own force is never enough. To maintain your spiritual strength in your battle with the sinful nature, you have to be in constant touch with your "Commanding Officer," God the Father, and He always has to be able to get in touch with you. Keep praying. First Thessalonians 5:17 says, *"Pray without ceasing."* Yield to God the Father in prayer, and ask God's Spirit to fill you every day. Trust God to provide what you need, when you need it, to overcome the sinful nature. *"Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature"* (Galatians 5:16). Don't neglect to fellowship with other believers who can encourage you in the Lord. *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together"* (Hebrews 10:25). Learn how other believers overcame the same struggles you are going through. *"God…comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."*

SPIRIT-FILLED AND SPIRIT-LED

Seek to be Spirit-filled and Spirit-led in everything you say and do. *"He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"* (Micah 6:8).

Many things impact the Spirit-filled life we are reclaiming in Jesus' name. It is often directly related to the content and quality of our thought life. Inner righteousness produces outward peace, but sinful attitudes frequently produce sinful behavior. The enemy also seeks to nullify the blessings of a Spirit-led life by trying to keep us from being totally committed to God. Yet one of his greatest weapons is unforgiveness:

> *In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.*
>
> *(1 John 3:10)*

I have found that one of the most effective ways of maintaining spiritual strength and releasing the power of God in your life is by forgiving someone who has hurt you. If you really want to defeat the enemy's plan to destroy your life, you have to forgive everyone who has ever wronged you, however seriously.

One OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS OF MAINTAINING SPIRITUAL STRENGTH AND

RELEASING THE POWER OF GOD IN YOUR LIFE IS BY FORGIVING THOSE WHO HAVE HURT YOU.

Bitterness and unforgiveness will eat away at you. If they are not conquered, they will destroy you. You will begin to feel the effects of unforgiveness in your physical body. I have heard countless people testify that, when they released their resentment toward someone and forgave the person who had hurt them, they began to get well physically. Nourishing hatred toward others can destroy you—spirit, soul, and body. This is exactly what the enemy hopes to accomplish. In contrast, forgiveness releases tremendous power. It brings healing and restores the joy of fellowship. It unbinds the tensions that tear you apart. Although a spiritual warrior is engaged in warfare with Satan, he is a person who is at peace with God and himself and who seeks to live in peace with other people. The Bible says, "*God has called us to peace*" (1 Corinthians 7:15).

Determine therefore to live in peace in all your relationships, because this is God's will. Jesus said, "*Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another*" (Mark 9:50). Hebrews 12:14 says, "*Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.*"

In fact, we can experience the peace of God in all circumstances. "*Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way*" (2 Thessalonians 3:16 NIV). This peace is already at work in our lives. Jesus said, "*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*" (John 14:27). These are the words of

the Captain of our salvation, who wants us to take back what we, in negligence, have permitted Satan to take away from us. Our peace belongs to us. It does not belong to the devil.

If we are not experiencing peace, then we must discover how we have let it slip away, or how we have allowed Satan to steal it from us. Though we experience challenges and spiritual attacks in life, God's peace is available to us at all times. It is constant, never changing. The peace of God drives out all fears caused by the evils of the past or present: *"Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble"* (Psalm 119:165). *"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You"* (Isaiah 26:3).

TRANSFORMED INTO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

In living the lifestyle of a spiritual warrior, we must realize that God desires for us to be continually renewed in our hearts and minds so that we have the same nature and mind-set as God Himself:

> *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*
>
> *(Ephesians 4:22-24 NIV)*

At the same time, Satan wants us to rebel against God's nature. He is a master at guerilla warfare, and he comes at us with subversion, deception, and intrigue. He attacks our thoughts when we least expect it and tries to provoke our sinful nature. We must always be on guard, and we must never give up our faith and trust in God during our battle against sin:

We MUST NEVER GIVE UP OUR FAITH AND TRUST IN GOD DURING OUR BATTLE AGAINST SIN.

> *Jesus* [is] *the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your*

souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

(Hebrews 12:2-6)

We are strengthened by the knowledge that Satan's final defeat will come from the hand of God—the same God who sustains us and trains us as we are daily transformed into the image of Jesus Christ, bearing fruit for Him:

The final outcome for a spiritual warrior is total victory over Satan and the sinful nature! A day is coming when, for the people of God, all questions will be answered and all the parts of the puzzle of life will fall into place. We will be complete in Christ, and we will be one with Him forever.

CHAPTER 8

PRAYER AND FASTING: POWERFUL WEAPONS IN GOD'S ARSENAL

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

—Ephesians 6:18

How often have you thought of prayer as a weapon? > Remember that, after describing specific pieces of spiritual armor in Ephesians 6, Paul added the above verse, revealing that prayer completes the *"whole armor of God"* (verses 11, 13).

When I was receiving the revelation of the man dressed in spiritual armor, the Lord gently placed His hand on me and said,

> When you have put on all the armor I have showed you, armor that is described in My Word, you are still not safe unless you utilize these two weapons in My arsenal—prayer and fasting. They are the most powerful resources I have given to believers. They are the most powerful combat devices in your full arsenal of weapons. Regardless of your offensive or defensive armor, you need these in your own arsenal if you desire to effectively attack and defeat Satan and his cohorts.

I began to ask God to show me the advantages of prayer and fasting. Over the next several months, He opened up His Word and truth to me regarding the blessings of prayer and fasting. What I discovered is essentially this: Prayer enables us to hear from Jesus, the Captain of God's army. Fasting gives us entry into the resources of God's power to carry out His will.

THE ROLE OF PRAYER

Much of spiritual warfare takes place on a cosmic level between God's holy angels and Satan and his demons. (See Daniel 10; Jude 9.) There is no indication that believers are directly involved in this phase of warfare, however, except through prayer.

Sometimes, WE HAVE TO FIGHT ON OUR KNEES IN ORDER TO WIN.

The Spirit of God spoke to me and said that men and women must be equipped to pray for families, churches, cities, and nations. They must guard and strengthen their own lives against the enemy's onslaughts. Every believer must be encouraged to enlist in an army of intercessors. Sometimes, we have to fight on our knees in order to win. God is calling men and women to warfare through prayer.

A Six-Fold Mandate

Let's take a closer look at Ephesians 6:18 and the six aspects of prayer that it emphasizes:

> *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.*

In the *New Living Translation*, the verse reads,

> *Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.*

In this significant verse, we learn that we are to…

1. Pray always
2. Pray with all kinds of prayers and supplications
3. Pray in the Spirit
4. Be watchful in prayer
5. Have all perseverance in prayer
6. Pray for all believers

1. Pray Always

Colossians 4:2 echoes the theme of Ephesians 6:18, saying, *"Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving."* The *New International Version* reads, *"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful."*

We are to devote ourselves to earnest prayer, including warfare prayer. There is nothing that we can't take to God's throne. In all things, we can ask for His grace, strength, and power.

The basis on which we come to God in warfare prayer is the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Jesus gives us access to the Father, confidence in coming to Him, and the assurance of help in time of need:

> *To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in* ***Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him***
>
> *(Ephesians 3:10-12, emphasis added)*

> *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.* ***Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need****.*
>
> *(Hebrews 4:14-16, emphasis added)*

2. Pray with All Kinds of Prayers and Supplications

Warfare praying includes many kinds of prayers and supplications to God. Paul wrote to Timothy,

> *Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications,prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks bemade for all men, for kings and all who are inauthority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceablelife in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,who desires all men to be saved and to come to theknowledge of the truth.*
>
> *(1 Timothy 2:1-4)*

When we come before the throne, we are to pray to the Father, through the Son. We must also come with a humble attitude. This does not negate the boldness with which we are to come. To be humble does not mean to be passive. We must realize, again, that our boldness is based on the work of Christ, not our own efforts. Without Christ, we are nothing, and we can do nothing. (See John 15:5.) Peter wrote, *"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time"* (1 Peter 5:6). We can rely completely on God as we live and work in obedience to Him, knowing that He will take care of everything that concerns us.

In this section, I want to discuss six aspects of warfare prayer: forgiveness, supplication, intercession, thankfulness, and praise.

F orgiveness PROVIDES CLEAR ACCESS TO GOD'S GRACE AND POWER.

Warfare praying includes forgiveness. As we saw in the previous chapter, one of the most effective ways of releasing the power of God is by forgiving those who have offended or hurt us. Forgiveness provides clear access to God's grace and power. Jesus said,

> *If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*
>
> *(Matthew 5:23-24)*

> *For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*
>
> *(Matthew 6:14-15)*

Not only does forgiveness bring healing and restoration, but it also connects us to God the Father and Jesus our Captain, enabling us to hear divine instruction and guidance in warfare praying.

Warfare praying includes supplication and intercession. Supplication involves entreaties, requests, or petitions.[1] Intercession involves requests made on behalf of others[2] or in response to others' actions. In the New Testament, there are many examples of believers offering supplication and interceding to God. In addition, in the only places where the actual word *intercession* appears in the New Testament, it describes the prayers of Jesus and the Holy Spirit on

our behalf. (See, for example, Romans 8:26-27, 34.) We read in Hebrews 7:25, *"*[Jesus] *is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make* ***intercession*** *for them"* [emphasis added]. We can follow the example of Christ's continual, earnest prayers as we intercede for others.

Warfare praying includes thankfulness. When we have thankful hearts, we are attributing everything that happens in our lives to God. The devil attributes evil to God, but the believer knows that God is good: *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning"* (James 1:17). *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose"* (Romans 8:28). In addition, when we express our gratitude to God for His mercy and love, we are lifting up His holy name. God responds to the prayers of those who truly honor Him from their hearts.

Warfare praying includes praise. *"Therefore by* [Jesus] *let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name"* (Hebrews 13:15). Praise is a vital part of prayer because it ushers us in to the presence of God, who inhabits the praises of His people. The psalmist said, *"You are… enthroned in* [*"inhabitest"* KJV] *the praises of Israel"* (Psalm 22:3). God is worthy of our praise. The notion that our praise pleases God is an awesome thing to think about.

PRAISE IS A VITAL PART OF PRAYER BECAUSE IT USHERS US IN TO THE PRESENCE OF GOD, WHO INHABITS THE PRAISES OF HIS PEOPLE.

Praise also gives *us* strength as we place our trust in Him. Job's wife told him to curse God and die. (See Job 2:9.) Instead, he praised God and lived. (See 1:21-22; 2:10; 42:10-16.) Again, the Lord has control over all the circumstances of our lives and uses them for our benefit. He is with us during our adversities, and He fights for us in the battles of life. When we glorify God, we are enabled to put the things, people, and events of our lives in eternal perspective.

3. Pray in the Spirit

You and I were created to be the vessels and instruments of the Spirit of God. Humanity's rebellion slammed the door in God's face, but Jesus came to create a new race of human beings in whom God could dwell and through whom God could work. When we are in Christ, we live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, and pray in the Spirit!

To pray in the Spirit generally means to speak in a heavenly language or an earthly language unknown to you, through the power of the Holy Spirit. In Mark 16:17, Jesus said, *"And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues…."* Believers first spoke in tongues on the day of Pentecost, after Jesus' ascension to heaven, when the disciples received the promised gift of the Spirit: *"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them"* (Acts 2:4).

Praying IN THE SPIRIT IS CRUCIAL FOR WARFARE PRAYER BECAUSE WE ARE NOT AWARE OF EVERYTHING THAT IS HAPPENING IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM.

The apostle Paul said that when a person prays using a heavenly language, "[he] *does not speak to men but to God."* Praying in the Spirit is crucial for warfare prayer because there is so much about what is happening in the spiritual realm that we are not aware of. Job didn't know the drama involving God and the devil that was going on

behind the scenes of the cataclysmic events occurring in his life. (See Job 1-2.) Daniel didn't know that the *"prince* [evil spirit] *of the kingdom of Persia"* was attempting to hinder the answer to his prayers until the angel came and told him. (See Daniel 10:12-14.)

The gift of the Holy Spirit therefore, given to us through Jesus, enables us to pray for needs that are important to God and for needs of which we are unaware: *"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express"* (Romans 8:26 NIV). Praying in the Spirit gives us the assurance that God is taking care of whatever is needed, and it gives us peace in trying times.

4. Be Watchful in Prayer

The Greek word for *"watchful"* in Ephesians 6:18 means to "be vigilant" and comes from the word for "keep awake."[3] It means to be alert.[4] This admonition is similar to Galatians 6:9, which says, *"Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."* We cannot allow ourselves to grow weary of engaging in warfare prayer or to become lackadaisical about it. We are called to pay attention to the needs of the body of Christ and to earnestly focus on what we are praying for. As we read earlier, *"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful"* (Colossians 4:2 NIV).

5. Have All Perseverance in Prayer

If you desire to be a triumphant believer who lives in the victory of Christ, you cannot expect to walk with the Lord without a fight for your faith. A life of faith in Jesus Christ is a life of conflict. Spiritual warfare is intense. It involves fierce battles that may seem unrelenting. The devil will oppose you. At times, it will seem as if the whole universe is against you.

Victorious spiritual warfare is possible as the Holy Spirit empowers you to fight through prayer. One mark of a truly spiritual warrior is that the tougher the battle gets, the more he keeps fighting. He is persistent, not passive. He is a victor, not a victim. The believer who wants to be an overcomer in spiritual battles wrestles until he wins the war. He understands that spiritual battles require spiritual tactics. He wields God's mighty spiritual weapons of prayer and fasting.

You CANNOT EXPECT TO WALK WITH THE LORD WITHOUT A FIGHT FOR YOUR FAITH.

Godly women and men are a source of constant frustration to the enemy. They understand that Satan uses human weaknesses to try to destroy them and their loved ones. Godly women will fight for their children, their husbands, and their extended families with the Word of God. They are sensitive to the Holy Spirit. They will readily do what the Word says to do in difficult situations. Through prayer, they protect their homes from the enemy's destructive powers.

God's Word is a very strong weapon in your spiritual artillery. When you use the Bible in your intercession warfare, you can bind the evil one and declare God's promises and victory for your life and for the lives of your loved ones.

The struggle between the visible world and the invisible world, even in the realm of prayer, is illustrated clearly in the trials of the prophet Daniel, as we have seen. While Daniel was praying, an unseen evil spirit hindered the answer to his prayers. Yet Daniel was assured that, even though the answer was delayed, his prayers had been heard. Similarly, when we pray, there are *"principalities, powers,...*[and] *spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places* (Ephesians 6:12) who will try to oppose us. Like Daniel, we can be assured that God hears and acknowledges our prayers the minute we pray them, and that sometimes we must persevere in order to receive the answers we seek.

In SPIRITUAL WARFARE, ALL THE RESOURCES OF HEAVEN ARE AT OUR DISPOSAL.

An important thing to notice from Daniel's experience is that angels are very much involved in the affairs of men and nations. The godly angel came in response to Daniel's prayers, while ungodly demons opposed him. Moreover, the unholy angels seemed to be linked with political kingdoms and their rulers. The angel told Daniel, *"And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come"* (Daniel 10:20). Yet, we can know that in spiritual warfare, all the resources of heaven are at our disposal. The power of political kingdoms or even

of entire armies is no match for God.

For example, in 2 Kings 6, we read that the army of Syria was fighting against Israel. God revealed to Elisha, the prophet, all of the Syrian king's battle plans in advance. The prophet told the plans to the king of Israel, and all of Syria's attacks were nullified. The king of Syria heard that Elisha was the source of his troubles, so he sent his army out to seize him. The Syrian troops surrounded the city of Dothan, where Elisha was staying.

When Elisha's servant arose early and went outside his tent, he saw the vast Syrian army surrounding the city. Panic-stricken, the servant rushed to Elisha and told him what he had seen. Although the servant was terrified by the enemy that surrounded them, Elisha remained calm. He knew what his servant did not know. He knew that spiritual warfare was going on. He also knew that earthly armies are no threat when the host of heaven is on your side. So he prayed that God would open the eyes of his servant so he could see the "invisible army" on duty, protecting them:

> *And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, and said, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all*
> *around Elisha. So when the Syrians came down to him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, and said, "Strike this people, I pray, with blindness." And He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha*
> *. Now Elisha said to them, "This is not the way, nor is this the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek." But he led them to Samaria.*

(2 Kings 6:15-19)

This heavenly army was sent to protect God's servant. Elisha prayed that the enemy armies might be struck with blindness. As a result, he was able to singlehandedly lead the entire Syrian army into the hands of the Israelite army. Many times, God has allowed me to see His heavenly army. I believe it is ever present, and it responds to the prayers of believers.

God may send an army of angels, as He did for Elisha, or He may send just one, as He did for Daniel, but He will come through for you. Believe Him, and trust Him at all times.

> *In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.*
>
> *(Psalm 62:7-8)*

6. Pray for All Believers

How can we pray for all believers? First, we need to be aware of the needs of believers in our own families, churches, and workplaces, and commit to praying regularly for them. We can also keep in touch with the needs of Christians around the world through missionary society updates and persecution alerts. The way we can truly pray for all believers is to pray in the Spirit, which we talked about earlier. We can intercede for others through the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit. *"He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will"* (Romans 8:27 NIV).

In addition to believers, we also need to pray for those who do not yet know the Lord and those who are opposing the things of God. The apostle Paul once strongly opposed the church, and he is now considered one of its foundational leaders. The Lord has wonderful purposes and plans that are beyond our imaginations. As we are faithful to pray, He will carry out His works of salvation, healing, and deliverance in the world.

PRAYER IS A BATTLEFIELD

As we engage in spiritual warfare, we must realize that prayer is not just a weapon, but it is also a theatre of war in itself! It is the battleground or arena where fierce spiritual conflicts occur. As I mentioned earlier, when we come before God in prayer, Satan may begin to accuse us, as he accused Joshua the high priest. (See Zechariah 3:1.) The devil may make a point of calling attention to our shortcomings and our *"filthy garments"* (verses 3-4). Once more, we must stand upon the fact that Christ has removed our sin and replaced it with His righteousness.

> Spiritual BATTLES ARE NOT USUALLY WON IN PUBLIC; THEY ARE OFTEN WON IN THE SECRET CHAMBER OF COMMUNION WITH GOD.

Satan readily attacks prayer because he knows that victories are won or lost on the battlefield of private prayer. They are not usually won in public; they are often won in the secret chamber of communion with God. On this spiritual battlefield, great men and women have reclaimed their faith, reestablished their confidence in God and in themselves, and won decisive spiritual battles.

The battlefield of prayer is also the arena where we conquer perhaps our greatest enemy—self. In this combat zone rages the conflict between a desire to please God and a desire to please people. If we want to live a lifestyle of obedience and fellowship with God,

as we talked about in the previous chapter, we can gain this victory through prayer.

FASTING AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Fasting is also a mighty weapon of spiritual warfare. Fasting gives us entry into the resources of God's power. When God gave me the word about prayer and fasting in the revelation of the spiritual armor, the words of 2 Corinthians came to me forcefully. Through these verses, I received an additional perspective on the power of fasting to overcome spiritual strongholds:

> *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal butmighty in God for pulling down strongholds, castingdown arguments and every high thing that exaltsitself against the knowledge of God, bringing everythought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,and being ready to punish all disobedience whenyour obedience is fulfilled.*
>
> *(2 Corinthians 10:4-6)*

In Matthew, we see an example of the kind of stronghold that fasting can break. Jesus' disciples were unable to cast a spirit of epilepsy out of a young boy. After Jesus cast the demon out, He explained to His disciples why they had not been able to do so themselves:

> *Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However,* ***this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting****.*
>
> *(Matthew 17:20-21, emphasis added)*

F asting GIVES US ENTRY INTO THE RESOURCES OF GOD'S POWER.

FASTING IN SCRIPTURE

The practice of fasting is taught prominently in Scripture. Fasting was engaged in for such purposes as repentance, drawing close to God, asking for strength, requesting healing, and seeking God's guidance and help.

- In Exodus 34:27-28, Moses fasted when he was communing with the Lord and receiving instructions for the people of Israel.
- In 1 Samuel 7:3-6, the people of Israel fasted for the glory of God to return to their nation.
- In 2 Samuel 3:30-35, David fasted when he was grieving over the death of a close friend.
- In Esther 4:15-17, Esther asked her friends to fast and pray with her when she needed favor with the king to protect the Jews from destruction.
- In Ezra 8:21-23, the prophet Ezra fasted for protection and guidance before he and other exiled Israelites journeyed from Babylon to Jerusalem.
- In Nehemiah 1:1-11, Nehemiah fasted in repentance for the sins of Israel and for favor and guidance in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem.
- In 2 Chronicles 20:1-3, Jehoshaphat fasted when the nation of Israel was faced with a threatening situation.
- In Psalm 35:11-13, David even fasted for his unfaithful friends

when they were ill.

- In Luke 2:37, we learn that fasting was a regular part of the spiritual regimen of Anna, a godly woman and a prophetess.
- In Matthew 4:1-2 and Luke 4:1-2, Jesus fasted for a prolonged period before beginning His ministry on earth.
- In Matthew 6:16-18, Jesus' statement, *"When you fast..."* showed that He assumed His disciples would fast, and gave specific instructions for them to follow.
- In Acts 9:1-18, Paul fasted for three days before he received the Holy Spirit.
- In Acts 13:1-3, as the church elders fasted and prayed, the Holy Spirit spoke to them and told them to commission Paul and Barnabas as missionaries.
- In Acts 14:23, Paul and Barnabas fasted before they appointed elders in the churches.

From the Scriptures, we learn that fasting played an important role in the lives and activities of God's people. It should also be an important part of our own spiritual lives, including our spiritual warfare. Dr. T. L. Lowery experienced tremendous power and anointing when he emerged from forty days of fasting and prayer a few years ago. These mighty weapons are a vital part of our spiritual arsenal.

Let us now look at different types and examples of fasts.

TYPES AND EXAMPLES OF FASTS

A *total fast* means going without food or water. A total fast is the kind that Esther called on her friends to make for three days and nights. (See Esther 4:16.)

A *limited fast* is restrictive in that the person fasts from certain kinds of foods. This is the kind Daniel went on when he fasted for three weeks. (See Daniel 10:3.)

The purest and most traditional form of fasting consists of drinking only water. An adult needs three quarts of water daily. We normally get this amount from the foods we eat, such as fruits, and from the beverages we drink. During a fast, it is crucial to drink at least twelve cups of liquid a day. Nutritionists recommend a combination of various fruit and vegetable juices.

When you go on a one-day fast, your body will still be getting its energy from the foods you ate the day before, so it will result in minimal discomfort. However, instead of a boisterous schedule on the day of the fast, consider engaging in quiet, meaningful activities such as prayer and Bible study, if possible.

For several days before you fast, you should cut back on your intake of liquids that contain caffeine, such as coffee, tea, and sodas. This reduces the potential for headaches, lethargy, and irritability during the fast. Do the same with high-sugar foods. Gradually reducing them will keep your body from "crash-landing," which it might do if you stop them abruptly. Remember, however, that you should always seek medical advice before starting an extended fast if

you have any health problems at all.[5]

NEGLECT OF FASTING

The Lord revealed to me that the devil tries to stop God's people from fasting with all kinds of enticements and temptations. Fasting seems to have "gone out of style" in today's church. Many Christians do not fast at all. Some consider it inconvenient, while others aren't willing to miss a single meal. This is one area in which the flesh is dominating the spirit in many believers' lives. If we are going to be effective in spiritual warfare, we need to make fasting a regular practice and perhaps even plan designated times of the year that we set aside for special prayer and fasting.

All FASTING SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ATTITUDE OF HUMILITY AND A CONFESSION OF SIN THAT ARE MORE THAN MERE PRETENSE AND WORDS.

THE ATTITUDE OF FASTING

What attitudes should we have while fasting? First, all fasting should be accompanied by humility and a confession of sin that are more than mere pretense and words. In Isaiah, the Lord lamented, *"These people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me"* (Isaiah 29:13).

Second, for our fasting and prayer to be effective, we must be generous and be in the habit of giving to and helping those in need. When the Israelites questioned why God seemed to be ignoring them when they fasted, God replied, *"'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?'"* (Isaiah 58:3). He went on to accuse them of exploiting their employees and of fasting *"for strife and debate"*; they were not fasting to draw closer to God. (See verses 3-4.) He reminded them that the purpose of fasting was not to make a person miserable and afflict his soul. (See verse 5.) Then He explained what it meant to fast in a way that was pleasing to Him:

> *Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose thebonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, tolet the oppressed go free, and that you break everyyoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,and that you bring to your house the poor who arecast out; when you see the naked, that you coverhim, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?*
>
> *(Isaiah 58:6-7)*

A TRUE FAST IS THE SURRENDER OF SELF IN WILLING SERVICE TO GOD AND MAN.

A true fast is the surrender of self in willing service to God and man. Doing without food not only makes us more aware of the awesomeness of God, but it also makes us conscious of those who continually have to do without the necessities of life. God will teach you to share your bread with the hungry and to care for the homeless. He will inspire you to reach out with compassion to the poor and the disenfranchised. Fasting from the right motives gives you the approval of God and prepares you to engage in spiritual warfare on behalf of others.

WARFARE PRAYING: INTERCEDING WITH JESUS

Amy Carmichael, noted missionary to India, illustrated the effectiveness of warfare praying when she was diligently fighting to rescue the "temple girls" of India, young girls who were being forced into prostitution. Once she grew discouraged and wondered if she could carry on any longer. She said,

> At last a day came when the burden grew too heavy for me; and then it was as though the tamarind trees about the house were not tamarind, but olive, and under one of these trees our Lord Jesus knelt alone. And I knew that this was His burden, not mine. It was He who was asking me to share it with Him, not I who was asking Him to share it with me. After that there was only one thing to do; who that saw him kneeling there could turn away and forget? Who could have done anything but go into the garden and kneel down beside him under the olive trees?[6]

My "garden of prayer" with Jesus is many different places, but I always receive strength from Him when I intercede. When we pray and fast, we can claim the full victory that our Lord Jesus Christ won on the cross. He disarmed evil powers and authorities; He made a public spectacle of them and triumphed over them. (See Colossians 2:15.) Warfare praying is praying in unity with Jesus *"to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ"*

(Ephesians 1:10 NIV), freeing those held captive by Satan, and bringing honor and glory to God.

His victory is our victory!

CHAPTER 9

THE NAME AND BLOOD OF JESUS

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

—Revelation 19:11-14

In this chapter, I want to discuss two other powerful weapons for spiritual warfare that I have used extensively in my ministry: the name of Jesus and the blood of Jesus.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE NAME OF JESUS

The effectiveness of spiritual warfare depends on authority and power. Jesus Christ has overwhelming authority and power over Satan, a created being who rebelled against the good and rightful rule of God. When we have been reconciled with God through Christ, understand spiritual warfare, and are living in a way that pleases Him, we have access to His authority and can command the devil and demons in His name.

> When WE HAVE BEEN RECONCILED WITH GOD THROUGH CHRIST, UNDERSTAND SPIRITUAL WARFARE, AND ARE LIVING IN A WAY THAT PLEASES HIM, WE HAVE ACCESS TO HIS AUTHORITY.

Deliverance evangelist Christopher Alam told of a man in Argentina who took his daughter to the lobby of his hotel one afternoon during a crusade. Sobbing, the man told the evangelist that his seventeen-year-old daughter, Jacqueline, had become demon-possessed after visiting occult healers to seek a cure for her sick mother.

The girl had not slept for ten days. She screamed like a wild animal and was totally out of control. They had visited the crusade three nights in a row, but she was still bound. The evangelist promised to minister to her personally after the service that evening.

"When I met with her," Rev. Alam said, "the demons in her screamed blasphemies in my face for forty-five minutes. I sensed that

I should not proceed any further, and decided to wait on the Lord's directions."

Rev. Alam was speaking in a church the next day when he spotted Jacqueline in the audience. She sat stone-faced and stared at him throughout the worship time. When the evangelist began to preach, she got up and ran outside. Her parents ran after her and dragged her back into the church. This happened two more times.

"When I gave the altar call," Rev. Alam continued, "Jacqueline, in an unexpected move, was the first to come forward. About three hundred people joined her. I began to pray from the platform and saw her fall on the ground under the power of God. Then something amazing happened. Her face seemed to glow—to literally emit light. This happened for about fifteen minutes, and then she woke up and stood to her feet, completely free."

Jacqueline's deliverance resulted in her whole family receiving Christ. They are now all serving God. Jacqueline later went to Bible school, and today she is a successful attorney. Families need deliverance from the oppression of Satan and of evil, and only the power of God through Jesus Christ can accomplish this.

Today, MANY FAMILIES NEED DELIVERANCE FROM THE OPPRESSION OF SATAN AND OF EVIL, AND ONLY THE POWER OF GOD CAN ACCOMPLISH THIS.

Jesus' authority comes from His deity, His sinless humanity, and the honor given to Him by God the Father because of His perfect obedience and sacrifice:

God exalted him to the highest place and gave himthe name that is above every name, that at thename of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongueconfess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of Godthe Father.

(Philippians 2:9-11 NIV)

I believe there is a great move of God in the land accompanied by mighty miracles. People are being healed and delivered by the power of God, and souls are being won to the kingdom through those who understand and engage in spiritual warfare according to God's Word.

Recently, in my home church in Washington, D.C., an elderly lady came into our midweek service just as we started to conclude our altar ministry. Several people had gathered at the altar area for prayer when the woman walked up to one of the pastors. In a calm voice, she asked for prayer; however, when the believers started to pray, she became violent and out of control.

Although she was small in stature and probably weighed less than ninety pounds, the demons in her were so violent and destructive that it took several grown men to subdue her. Then, after about fifteen minutes of praying and intense spiritual warfare, God delivered her from the demonic influence that had her bound.

The glory of God came on the woman's countenance, and the believers began to rejoice with her. All her life, she had walked in darkness, but she was delivered by the power of God. Now she is enjoying the marvelous experience of fellowship in the family of God.

Satan and his demons can be rebuked and cast out only through the triumph of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are never to attempt to use magic, divination, bargaining, or ritual when dealing with evil spirits. Sacred objects, even holy water and crosses,

are no substitution for the power of the Holy Spirit. In addition, they could be perceived by others as "Christian magic." This will confuse them about the truth of deliverance through Jesus Christ.

We ARE NEVER TO ATTEMPT TO USE MAGIC, DIVINATION, BARGAINING, OR RITUAL WHEN DEALING WITH EVIL SPIRITS.

Most demons will leave when you give a direct command in Jesus' name. Others, however, can be cast out only by prayer and fasting, as we discussed earlier. (See Matthew 17:21.) We must rely totally on the name of Jesus Christ and on the powerful work He did at Calvary through His atoning blood.

A holy and anointed minister of God, the Reverend Byron Seymour, shared this story with me about spiritual warfare:

> One night in West Virginia, I was attacked by the devil in an unusual and unforgettable way. In the darkest hours of the night, I found myself still totally awake. The door to my bedroom opened and a creature that looked like a man walked in. He looked to be about 6 feet tall, weighing about 160 pounds. He wore a white shirt with a black suit and black tie.
>
> My first thought was that God had dispatched an angel to come and help me. The man walked over to the left side of the bed and started toward me with his hands outstretched. I thought he was going to lay hands on me and pray for me. Instead, he took both of his hands and put them around my neck. He began to physically strangle me.

My whole body was totally paralyzed. The only parts of my body that would work were my eyes—I could still see. It seemed as though a big, black mass was hovering over me. The creature was literally strangling me to death! I could not breathe. I could not yell or make any sound. In desperation, I began to cry within me, *In the name of Jesus! In the name of Jesus!* but the sound would not come out of my mouth.

When it felt as though I was going to be physically suffocated and lose consciousness, the anointing of the Holy Ghost was like a laser inside my inner being, piercing, touching, and overwhelming me. The creature that looked like a man immediately disappeared like a vapor! God then allowed me to go to sleep.

Several days later, Rev. Seymour was conducting some meetings in Tennessee when he experienced a similar attack that he perceived was connected to the previous one:

I experienced some of the most severe warfare and pressure I have ever experienced. I felt as though I could not possibly conduct service that night. I told the pastor that I needed to cancel the service because of the pressure I was feeling—pressure that would not let up. He said he could not cancel the service because it was already advertised on the radio and we would have some special guests from Cleveland, Tennessee—miles away.

As the service approached, I could not even pray. I felt as though God was miles away from me. During the first part of

the service, I still could not get any relief. I felt I was standing alone. I was introduced to the congregation, and when I stepped into the pulpit, I felt as if I would literally die. I felt paralyzed. I did not know if I could even open my mouth.

Suddenly, an overwhelming, powerful anointing fell on me. It sounded as if there was a voice coming into my ears, and I began to speak what I heard out of my mouth. I was preaching with tremendous power and anointing. I felt as though I was in another world.

In the middle of the sermon, a door behind me burst open onto the platform and a man in his late 20s or early 30s came into the sanctuary. This was in the wintertime, and he was wearing only a pair of old jeans. Both his hair and beard were very long and terribly matted. It looked as though he had been running in the mountains for weeks.

Someone in the congregation said, "Brother Seymour, this man needs deliverance!" (He was familiar to the congregation.) I said to the congregation, "Whatever anyone needs from God, come on up to the altar now!"

As the people were coming to the front, I walked over to this wild man, who was at the altar with people praying around him. When I reached to lay my hands on his head, he leaped to his feet and went for my neck with both of his hands. Immediately, I remembered the way the devil had gotten me by the neck some days before in West Virginia. When this happened, the people in the congregation jumped to their feet and ran to the back of the room.

As the man came toward me, I pointed my finger toward him and cried, "In the name of Jesus!" The man was stopped by the power of the Holy Ghost inside me. This happened several times. The man would come toward me again, and again I would cry, "In the name of Jesus!" The man would freeze momentarily, then regain himself.

Six men from the congregation rushed up and grabbed the man. Three would try to hold on to each arm, and he would fling them off as if they were nothing. He was growling and snarling at me like a lion. I realized I was going to have to cast the devil out of this man or he would kill me. People could not protect me, for humans could not bind or contain him.

Realizing the dangerous situation I faced, I mustered all the faith I could. By now the pastor and his nephew were by my side. As the power of the Holy Spirit rose up, I began to cast the demons out of the man. He fell limp and helpless to the floor and began weeping. He said, "Oh, my Lord! I'm naked." A man from the congregation put his coat around him.

After he was delivered, the man testified, "Today the devil let me know he was going to physically kill me tonight. You don't know how much I had to fight and struggle to get down the mountain to this building!" Then the power of God came on him and he was totally delivered that night.

Now I understood why God had let me have that experience in West Virginia.

God prepares us to fight against the forces of darkness. Not all believers will experience the kind of attack that Reverend Seymour

did, but if you are a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will do battle with evil and with Satan.

THE POWER OF THE BLOOD OF JESUS

"Pleading the blood of Jesus" is more than just a catchphrase. It is, in a sense, a legal term. It means to invoke what Christ has done on the cross over a particular situation or person. A blood covering is provided through faith in God, prayer, and belief in the covenant of God. Thank God, we can overcome the temptation to sin, we can overcome the past, and we can overcome Satan—all enemies that try to destroy us.

When we say that we cover others with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, this means that we claim the blood that He shed, which enabled us to enter into the new covenant with God. The Scripture says, we can have *"boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through… His flesh"* (Hebrews 10:19-20). It means that almighty God will look down from heaven and watch over us and protect us. It means that we can also pray over our children and cover them with the covenant blood of Jesus Christ. Demons tremble at the name of Jesus, and they flee at the blood of the Lamb.

Pleading the blood gives us bold and confident access to God's power and providence. I have learned that when we are praying for people, and God impresses upon us to cover them with the blood, we should say, "I cover you with the blood of Jesus, the covenant of God!"

A BLOOD COVERING IS PROVIDED THROUGH FAITH

IN GOD, PRAYER, AND BELIEF IN THE COVENANT OF GOD.

We can plead the blood for ourselves when the devil tries to torment us with the memory of past sins that have already been forgiven. Doing this reminds us and the devil that God has forgotten our sins because of Christ's sacrifice and His blood. He has shed His blood so that sin no longer has dominion over the believer who trusts completely in Him. The Word of God says, *"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony"* (Revelation 12:11). I believe that *"the word of* [our] *testimony"* simply means believing in the efficacy of the blood. A believer who pleads the blood in a time of dire circumstance or attack by the enemy is calling on the power and authority of Christ's blood. When we plead the blood, we acknowledge and testify to the overcoming power of the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf.

To defeat the devil, you need to stand on the blood and proclaim its power! With that blood, we overcome Satan and the entire spiritual underworld. Demons are terrified by the blood. They cannot remain in the presence of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Don't let the enemy rob you of the truth of what defeats him. Jesus, our wonderful Lord and Savior, meets Satan, the flesh, and the world at the boundary of blood. Just as the Israelites did not have to fight if they trusted that God would fight for them—if they knew that *"the battle is the Lord's"* (1 Samuel 17:47)—so Jesus today fights our battles for us.

Whenever you speak the authority of the blood of Jesus Christ and actuate the power of the covenant of God, a battle will go on in the

heavens and on the earth. When you stand boldly and proclaim the Word of the living God, therefore, know that in the name of Jesus, and through His blood, demons will flee and diseases will be healed. Many miracles, signs, and wonders will occur through the prayers of God's people. Let us look at some instances of healing and deliverance through the power of Jesus' blood.

Believers may encounter literal manifestations of evil spirits at times. I was awakened one night at about three o'clock in the morning, and I saw a large circle of light over my son's bed. Apart from the moonlight coming through the window, this was the only light in the room.

Then I saw an angel gazing at my son with a firm look on his face. His countenance mirrored strength. The angel drew a sword and started toward my son. Then I saw what looked like a large, black, caterpillar-like being wrapped around my son, who had been sick for several days with an intense fever.

The angel spoke in an authoritative voice and commanded the evil spirit to be loosed. The evil spirit obeyed the angel as he took the sword and removed that spirit of fever from my sick child. Then the angel and the evil spirit departed from the room.

Immediately, I rushed over to my son and picked him up. The power of God was on both of us, and my son was completely healed and delivered. Every bit of his fever was gone—for the first time in several days! I began to praise the Lord for delivering His people out of trouble.

Demons TREMBLE AT THE NAME OF JESUS, AND THEY FLEE AT THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB.

Another time, I was in my room in intense intercession and earnest prayer. I was lying on my stomach, and suddenly I felt an evil presence enter the room. I cried out, "God, what is this?" Then I felt the evil force come nearer, and I felt a pressure on my back.

By now I could not move. It felt like I was frozen by some sinister, evil force. I could not even open my mouth and say aloud, "Jesus!" But in my heart, I was praying, *Jesus, Jesus. Help me.* I began to plead the blood of Jesus. I remember telling the devil, *When you let me go and turn me loose, I will tear your kingdom down!*

After a while, I felt the evil spirit move away from me. I felt the pressure let up. I was no longer frozen to the spot. I jumped up and said, "Jesus, I rebuke the devil in Your name. By Your blood, I am saved. I am Your child. I love You, Jesus." I was completely delivered and set free.

Roy Tucker, a very great pastor, described to me an encounter he had with demonic powers. It was a bizarre and terrifying experience that shows the ferocity and intensity of battling the forces of evil in spiritual warfare.

He said he first thought he was having a dream. He could feel something—it felt like a physical presence—pressing on his body. He felt weighted down, paralyzed. He could not imagine what was happening to him. He said it was as though he was screaming, but not a sound was coming out of his mouth. Roy knew an enemy from Satan had come to do something terrible to him. He knew in his spirit that this was a spiritual attack from the devil himself.

It was the middle of the night when he awoke; it was pitch dark. He could hear voices, as if someone was in the room with him, so he

tried to open his eyes, but He could not. In fact, he could not move any part of his body. He tried to call out to someone for help but could not make a sound. He could not even move his lips.

The voices grew louder and louder. Soon they were close to him—right up next to him—screaming in his ears. He knew the voices belonged to evil spirits. With wild, raucous voices, they were scolding him for something he had or had not done—something that had offended them.

Then, he said, he felt his body floating upward; he was levitating from the bed. He found himself hovering against the ceiling, unable to move or speak or do anything. The screaming voices continued their relentless assault on his senses. He thought he was going mad. He actually thought he was going to die!

Gradually, his eyes opened and he could look around, but he could not do anything else. In addition to the voices, He sensed a malevolent presence in the room with him. Because of the pressure on his chest, he had difficulty breathing. As the evil spirit tormented him, he experienced sheer terror.

Finally, he had the presence of mind to realize that he could fight against this extreme spiritual attack of the devil. He willed himself to cry out, in his mind, *In the name of Jesus, and in the power of the blood of the Lamb, I resist the devil and all his evil spirits.* Immediately, he felt a lessening of the pressure!

Complete deliverance did not come immediately. But as he kept repeating the name of Jesus and calling on the blood of the Lamb, he became more free and more able to move and speak. By now, he could whisper, "Jesus, Jesus." His voice grew louder and stronger, and he

was liberated from the oppressive power of the enemy by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Pleading THE BLOOD GIVES US BOLD AND CONFIDENT ACCESS TO GOD'S POWER AND PROVIDENCE.

Let me share one final testimony from a fellow believer:

> Spiritual warfare means that you have the opportunity to defeat the devil through Jesus' blood and through His name. I was beginning my sophomore year of Bible college when I first experienced spiritual warfare. One night I was awakened from sleep by a noise in my room. Wide awake, I heard voices—threatening voices, frightening voices!
>
> I can still hear them to this day. The frightening sound was unlike anything I had heard before or since. It sounded like many voices synchronized together into one blended tone. The voice said over and over, "I'm going to destroy you!"
>
> I was paralyzed with fear. In terror, I tried to scream and call my parents, who were in the next room, but I was unable to make a sound. The only thing I could do was to whisper the name Jesus.
>
> At first I could only say His name in my mind, but quickly my mind was at ease. Then I could whisper His name, and each time I whispered "Jesus," I gained more liberty and freedom. I noticed that as I said that powerful name, my voice became louder and louder until the evil presence that dominated the atmosphere left the room.

I fell asleep immediately; God had given His beloved sleep. The next morning I awoke refreshed. There were no side effects from the spiritual encounter the night before.

Not many weeks afterward, I had a second encounter. Again I was awakened out of sleep by the sense that someone or something was in my room.

Because I didn't have the fear I had before, I passed it off and rolled over to go back to sleep. As I turned in my bed again, I noticed a shadow in the room. It was getting closer. Now I began to feel pressure around my throat and chest. The shadow didn't stop at the foot of the bed but came still closer. I experienced intense pain and had the sensation of being choked and smothered.

I called on the name of Jesus to break the hold of the enemy. The battle didn't last long, but it was intense. Afterward, I remember going in to the bathroom and looking into the mirror. My eyes were so bloodshot that I couldn't see the white in them at all. It seemed as though the veins in my eyes were about to burst from the pressure. Thank God, the name and power of Jesus delivered me.

I didn't understand what was happening, but the Lord revealed to me that the enemy was trying to keep me from going into the ministry. He was using his weapons of fear and intimidation. Thank God, I had already learned that the name of Jesus and the blood of Jesus are more than a match for the devil.

Yes, Jesus' name and blood are more than a match for Satan, sin, and the world. Jesus' authority is over heaven and earth and all that is

in them, whether it be angel, demon, man, woman, nation, army, sickness, or act of nature. Whatever needs and difficulties you encounter, and no matter how fierce the enemy's attacks, you can rely on Jesus' love, power, and grace. He extends His authority to us so that we can minister alongside Him to manifest the power of the kingdom of God through His name and His atoning blood.

CHAPTER 10

OCCUPYING ENEMY TERRITORY

Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

—2 Corinthians 2:14

One night, I was travailing in prayer, deeply engaged in intercession, when the Lord spoke to me,

> Mary, you are not alone in My work. I have an army of believers who are holding your hands up, who are standing with you, and who are praying with you and for you. Know that I am always with you, and you can find strength in My Word.

God began to show me a great army of His saints. There were millions, but they were divided into different groups. Each group was engaged in a separate, distinct mission. Some believers were in an army of liberation. Others were in an army of occupation. Still others were in an army that was busy rebuilding what had been torn down. Every individual, however, was engaged in a ministry of deliverance. I saw these armies, people from every nation, standing with Christ in His battle against evil.

THE MINISTERING ARMY OF GOD

In this concluding chapter, I would like to focus on the mission of the people of God on earth and what it means for us to have a vital role in the army of God. I will use the analogies of armies of liberation, occupation, and recovery to show the different ways in which God may call us to minister to others in Jesus' name in spiritual warfare. We should pray and ask the Lord which aspect of His army He wants us to fulfill at any given time.

An Army That Liberates

Jesus began His ministry by proclaiming Himself as the Great Liberator:

> *And* [Jesus] *was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."...And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*
>
> *(Luke 4:17-19, 21)*

Jesus followed this proclamation by calling men and women (His disciples and other followers) to join is army of deliverance. As they had received freedom in Christ, they were to liberate others in His name. This is how Jesus gave authority to the original twelve disciples:

> *And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease....*[Jesus commanded them,] *"And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."*
>
> *(Matthew 10:1, 7-8)*

Jesus sends us forth today with the same authority. *"As the Father*

has sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21). We must see ourselves as a massive spiritual army of awesome deliverance! In this book, we have learned much about spiritual warfare and the weapons God has given us to defeat the enemy.

Sometimes, THE PRESSING NEED IS FOR A SPIRITUAL ARMY OF OCCUPATION.

An Army That Brings Peace and Order

Sometimes, the pressing need is for a spiritual army of occupation. At the end of World War II, the Axis armies of Japan and Germany had been thoroughly defeated, freeing much of the world from the control of invading armies. Yet, everyone knew that, left alone, these countries might recover their old strength, regroup, and cause strife again. The situation called for an occupying army to restore order to the chaos that existed in these countries, and to govern them until they could get back on their feet.

In Japan, General Douglas MacArthur was appointed Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces to lead the occupation army. The army governed the country and helped it through a very difficult time. When the United States ended the occupation six years later, they had helped a devastated Japan to rebuild itself, institute a democratic government, and chart a course that has made it one of the world's leading industrial powers.

The main goals of the occupation government were to end militarism in Japan, democratize the country, and repair its economy. The occupying armies did not fight pitched battles with an enemy, but they played a vital role in the fight for freedom.

As WE INTERCEDE, WE BECOME CHANNELS FOR A PEACEFUL, ORDERLY, AND STABLE SOCIETY.

Likewise, part of being God's army is to be an army of "occupation." This means we are to continue to intercede and to

become channels for a peaceful, orderly, and stable society. We can do this in a number of ways, including providing wise counsel, godly examples, biblical principles, and positive solutions for the needs and problems of the world.

An Army That Rebuilds and Restores

General Lucius Clay was appointed Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe. The task of this army, however, involved more than occupying. The entire continent lay in ruins, ravaged by war and strewn with broken cities and despairing people. Homeless children whose parents had been killed and whose homes had been destroyed by bombs and artillery roamed the streets and scavenged for food.

A massive effort was needed for recovery and rebuilding. Europe had neither the manpower nor the resources to do the job. The armies of war had destroyed virtually all the continent's railways, roads, port facilities, communications, and basic infrastructure. In a speech to Congress outlining the Truman Doctrine, the president said that more than a thousand villages in Europe had been burned. Eighty-five percent of the children were tubercular. Livestock, poultry, and draft animals had almost disappeared. Inflation had wiped out practically all savings.

Being IN GOD'S ARMY INVOLVES RESCUE, RECOVERY, AND REBUILDING.

With the European Recovery Program, known popularly as the Marshall Plan, the United States led the continent in a massive rescue, recovery, and rebuilding program. United States armed forces carried the bulk of the load, furnishing manpower in rebuilding devastated infrastructures, conducting relief missions, and restoring confidence.

Likewise, being in God's army involves rescue, recovery, and rebuilding. More than anything else, the need of the hour is for God's people to rebuild what Satan has torn down and destroyed. Spiritual landscapes need to be rebuilt. There are lost souls and institutions that we can help put back on their feet through the power of God to save and restore.

To be a spiritual warrior means to be idealistic. However, it also means to be realistic by ministering to the whole person and giving practical help. Being a soldier in God's army includes fighting hunger, poverty, desperation, and confusion. We must help feed the starving and shelter the homeless.

More than anything else, spiritual warfare offers people hope—the hope that is in Jesus Christ. Therefore,

- let us offer hope to the devastated.
- let us restore confidence to the timid.
- let us rebuild what is shattered and in ruins.
- let us translate the claims and promises of the gospel into concrete actions to help others in need.

This is God's way of reclaiming what Satan has stolen and destroyed.

A MIGHTY WORK

There is a mighty work to be done in these last days. Spiritual warfare is vital to carrying forth the message of the gospel, and God needs all of us to help bring in the end-time harvest of souls. Leading people to salvation is one thing, but keeping them free is another. In order to do both, we have to live a lifestyle of spiritual warfare.

Be Persevering

As we discussed earlier, this can take perseverance. Victory over Satan's attacks is not always obvious. Instead of his defeat and our success, sometimes it looks like our defeat and the devil's success. When Jesus died on the cross, it seemed as if the enemy had won. But by His death and resurrection, Jesus fully defeated Satan, brought about our salvation, and enabled us to be more than conquerors.

What LOOKS LIKE DEFEAT FOR BELIEVERS IS SOMETIMES THEIR GREATEST VICTORY.

Similarly, what looks like defeat for believers is sometimes their greatest victory. The book of Revelation tells of a time when Satan and his subordinates will appear to triumph over the saints, but it will only be a momentary defeat that will accomplish the purposes of God and serve as a prelude to Satan's final destruction:

> *And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also.*
>
> *(Revelation 6:9-11 NASB)*

Spiritual warfare takes its toll on people. We must always rely on God and His love to strengthen us for the task until Christ returns and brings the ultimate victory.

> *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
>
> *(Romans 8:35-39)*

Be Prepared

As we have learned, proper preparation is also necessary. An army cannot march into battle and expect to win without necessary provisions and support. We have to put on the whole armor of God and intercede in prayer. We must read and remember God's Word. We need to continually worship God and fellowship with other believers.

One night, when I was in deep intercessory prayer, God spoke to me about the mission and ministry to which He has called me. It gave me such peace.

My child, the words you speak are not your own. My Spirit is within you, and you will know when to speak and when to refrain from speaking. The work you are doing is not your work; it is Mine. [Your] work is not done in your own strength and might; it is done in My strength and might.

I am a God of judgment and a God of war as well as a God of love. You must continue to gather My children together. You must proclaim My Word and tell My people to continue to take back what the enemy has stolen from them. I will use you to rebuke those who rise up against Me, saith the Lord.

Call on My strength. When you encounter evil forces, go forth in boldness. Use the power of My name, My Word, and My blood. Rebuke every enemy in My name. Don't ignore the world, the flesh, and the devil. Overcome them by the word of your testimony and by the power of My blood that was shed for you. You must continue to

give this message to My people!

This book is part of my commitment to fulfill this calling. God bless you as you move forward in spiritual warfare, *"strong in the Lord and in the power of His might"* (Ephesians 6:10)!

APPENDICES & NOTES

APPENDIX A

SPIRITUAL WARFARE & PERSONAL POTENTIAL:

DR. T. L. LOWERY INTERVIEWS DR. JEFF O'NEAL

When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him.

—Isaiah 59:19

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Jeff O'Neal is CEO of Micah's Jewelry, Inc., of Atlanta, Georgia. He is a successful Christian businessman who has a heart for spreading the gospel in the marketplace. He also knows firsthand the reality of spiritual warfare. The following interview shows how the enemy often tries to detour us, or deter us, from reaching our maximum potential in Jesus Christ. **Dr. T. L. Lowery:** Dr. O'Neal and I have both experienced great moments in our lives when we encountered the devil and the sinister powers of darkness. We have come against many strongholds that Satan has built up around us to try to keep us from reaching our destinies. In our varied experiences, we have witnessed some awesome deliverances. We have found that, as long as we try to fight the battle in ourselves, God turns the situation and its outcome over to us. But when we humble ourselves and turn the battle over to God, when we understand that the battle is the Lord's and not ours, then God sovereignly and divinely intervenes to show us His glory. He is faithful to give us peace and victory.

I have asked Dr. O'Neal to share with us one of the most difficult experiences he has gone through in spiritual warfare, so that we can gain additional insight into how to fulfill the purposes and potential God has ordained for our lives.

Dr. Jeff O'Neal: As a young businessman, at age thirty-eight, I discovered that God was in the process of defining who I was, including His plan, purposes, and destiny for my life. Little did I know then that my life was about to make a drastic change. God cast

me into the "fire," just as Job was cast into the "fire."

One night, I was leaving a trade show in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, at about nine o'clock. Sleet and snow had come into the area, and when we left the convention center, I was detoured away around the mountain, a route that would take me an extra three hours to get home. Running low on fuel, I became concerned. Being in the jewelry business, I had to be careful and think about security issues. I knew the potential for danger because I was carrying large amounts of jewelry.

I said to my associate, "We need to get some gas. If we don't, we are going to mess around here and run out of gas. We could get robbed!" Not realizing the power of my own words, I spoke my fears, setting in motion the things that were about to take place. Literally, I spoke with my own words the very thing that was about to happen.

This experience has helped me to understand the principle of the power of the tongue to speak things upon our lives and our families. The wrong use of the tongue can set things in motion. But God was sovereignly in control as I stopped to get fuel there that night. Little did I know, as I stepped away to make a phone call to let everyone know we were safe and things were okay, that we were going to be several hours late. Little did I know that I was being followed by organized crime, as the FBI confirmed after an eighteen-month investigation. That night they took my truck, my trailer, and over $1.5 million worth of inventory and assets.

In just a few moments—in seconds—my whole life changed. Everything we owned was lost. Because I stepped away from the

vehicle, even the insurance refused to pay what we had invested. Literally, we took a bottom-line loss of everything we had.

At that moment, God was defining who I was to become. You see, without a test, there is no testimony. The night we were robbed, I asked the man in charge of that facility, "Can I go to an office somewhere? I need to talk to my Father before I talk with the police." I wouldn't talk to the police until I first talked to my Father in heaven.

The man pointed to a door. I walked to the door, thinking he had identified with my pain. I struggled to get the door open; it was so dark I couldn't see. I flipped the light switch and found myself in a mop closet with a muddy floor and an old cast-iron sink. But I knew God was sovereign, so I said, "Well, if this is the way it has to be, so be it."

I fell on my knees, gripped the cast-iron sink, and began to cry out to God. First, I began to acknowledge God's sovereignty. I said, "God, I know You are sovereign. I know You rule and reign, and You are in control of all things. God, I know where I am with You. I acknowledge my covenant with You."

I went from God's sovereignty to the covenant I had with Him as His child, His son. I prayed, "God, I know that I am Your child; and God, I know where I stand with You. Although I don't understand everything that is taking place in my life right now, I know You are sovereignly in control. I pray to You right now, Lord God, that You will touch me and help me to understand and trust You."

Romans 8:26 says that when you don't even know what to say, when you don't even know what to pray, the Spirit of God will begin

to bring utterance. The Spirit within me began to moan and groan and cry out into my desperate situation. I began praying to the Lord through my spirit, not by my mind. I said things that didn't make any sense to my reason. Although the words were in English, they were supernaturally given. As prayed in the Spirit, I started off with these words: "Lord, I am not going to ask you to return our truck, trailer, and over $1.5 million worth of inventory." Something said to me, *What are you saying?* I said, "God, I am not going to ask You to return it because You knew it would be taken before the men ever did it."

I had to trust in the Lord. Proverbs 3:5-6, says, *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight"* (NIV). I had to accept the fact that God was sovereignly in control. So I prayed, "First, I will acknowledge the fact that You knew it would be taken. You sovereignly withdrew Your hand and allowed it to be taken, because the enemy cannot touch one hair on my head unless You allow it. So God, You have allowed this to be.

"God, give me the faith to trust in You. I need a greater measure of faith than I have ever had in my life. I need the faith to stand on Your Word and know that You're in complete control. God, I ask for Your strength because I cannot carry this burden within myself. I cannot do this within myself. I need to trust in You and lean on You.

"God, give me the wisdom to pick up the pieces and put things back together again."

I uttered this prayer, asking for faith, strength, and wisdom to move forward. While we lost everything we owned that night, little

did I know that God was going to take me through a difficult course for about a year.

We did not file for bankruptcy. We stood on the Word of God and followed biblical principles. We diligently worked our way through. God gave us a plan, and He gave us a strategy. He also gave us the wisdom we needed to know what to do.

By the grace of God, He sent us enough business so that we could overcome. We paid back everyone what we owed them and continued to operate a business, which grew.

We are wholesalers, and we import and export quality jewelry. My suppliers from all over the world were amazed. Two Jewish men walked into my store a year later in January, expecting to see a man who was broken down, distraught, utterly destroyed. They came in January because they had let me have some merchandise. They thought that, by the time Christmas was over, and I had sold a little, they would come in and take what was left, cash out, and sell our accounts.

When they walked in the doors, rather than seeing someone broken, torn down, and destroyed, they saw a man standing out front, sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. I was witnessing and preaching to my customers with a big smile and a glow on my face. Amazed, they walked over, looked at me, and said, "There's no doubt that God's hand is on this place and on your life, and we're proud to be associated with you, Jeff. It is an honor to work with someone like you. We have heard you testify of sharing and sponsoring mission work around the world, and we not only want to partner with your business, we want to partner with you in ministry."

Thus God began to take the wealth of Muslims, Jews, and Buddhists—our suppliers—and use it for ministry. They wanted to sponsor ministry we were affiliated with because of the testimony and the testing we went through, and they wanted to tap into that anointing. God touched these people and caused them to know that only a sovereign God could bring us through a situation like this.

Job 42:12-13 says that all that Job lost was restored to him. God cast me into the fire, but when we came out, we came out shining as pure gold. Little did I know then that the next test would be that, once God restored me, He would call me to leave Micah's.

When I told my employees that God had called me to leave Micah's and to go out and minister and preach, they said, "What do you mean, you're leaving? Who's going to run the company?"

I said to them, "Don't you know? Don't you understand? I told you that God runs this company. I have never run it; it has always been directed by His hand. He is the One who directs our thoughts, our ways, and everything we do. Since He has led me away to minister, He has put others in place who will continue the operation of Micah's."

I have now been gone three years, and Micah's continues to grow and expand. God honors our obedience. As He speaks to us, we must trust, submit, and obey. The testimony to our suppliers is the fact that they see the hand of God working through an entity created and breathed into existence through the Spirit of God for one purpose: to lift up the name of Jesus Christ and to share the gospel around the world.

God brought my wife, Okyon, and me into existence so that we

would flow in the apostolic and the prophetic, so that we would stand in the marketplace, as Isaiah did 2,400 years ago, and speak His Word to the people He sent through those doors, and so we would challenge others to take their storefronts and turn them into mission fronts for the kingdom of God.

Dr. T. L. Lowery: Brother O'Neal, sometimes people find themselves in the heat of the battle. Like Joseph, they may be in prison. Like David facing Goliath, they are going through a difficult time in their lives. It seems as if the forces of hell are rising up against them from every direction. When they try to climb out, it's like quicksand. They seem to sink deeper and deeper. When they take one step forward, they slide back two steps. Impossible, unbearable situations confront some people every day. Everything seems dark; they can't see any light at the end of the tunnel. Things continue to close in around them and come down upon them.

What would your counsel be to a person who is facing such circumstances as these?>

Dr. Jeff O'Neal: Dr. Lowery, it didn't all just happen overnight. It took a year for us to overcome this. I had moments of depression, and I had moments when I struggled, but every day I would seek God in prayer and through His Word. God would give me what I needed for that moment. God would give me the revelation, the strength, and the wisdom I needed for the next step I had to take. You see, God gave manna to the children of Israel so that He could test them to see if they would walk in accordance with His instruction. (See Exodus 16:4.) But they had to gather it daily.

God will give you what you need for the moment. He told us to

take no thought of tomorrow, for tomorrow will take care of itself. (See Matthew 6:34.) God clearly said in His Word that, if we will call out to Him, He will answer us. *"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know"* (Jeremiah 33:3).

I didn't have the wisdom to know what to do or how to win this battle, but God ordered my steps through His Word: *"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way"* (Psalm 37:23). God would direct my thoughts. He would direct my steps to know what I needed to know moment by moment. This kind of guidance comes through prayer and through the Word of God. The Spirit of God within you will begin to take over and begin to lead and direct you when you can't, within yourself, do the things you need to do.

Dr. T. L. Lowery: Brother O'Neal, going through such circumstances affects the sphere of your influence. It affects your family. You have to deal with the circumstances and the reverses in the spiritual warfare you are involved in, but your family is also involved. You have to guard your attitude and your demeanor in how you continue to minister to your family and be the priest of your household.

How were you able to really bring all these things together and keep a sound mind and a sound heart?

Dr. Jeff O'Neal: Again, it was through prayer. I began to cut off all influences that were not of God. I did not want to be associated with things and people and situations that were being poured into my spirit but were not positive and were not going to give me strength. God literally stripped me down until I was naked, in a metaphorical

sense. As when Isaiah was stripped down to nothing (see Isaiah 20:2), my best friends, my family, and others did not understand. I've had Christian brothers say, "Well, God really has a way of getting your attention, doesn't He?" They would speak to me in a judgmental way, as Job's friends did to him.

In John 9, some people said that since a certain man was born blind, his parents must have sinned. They did not know that God, in His sovereignty, allows things to come about for different purposes and reasons. Rather than confer with flesh and blood, I conferred with my Father in heaven, and I conferred in the Spirit. I chose not to walk in the natural realm, and I began to isolate myself and insulate myself with the Word of God and prayer.

My wife and I were supposed to be yoked together in agreement, so together we stayed in Word of God and in prayer. The Spirit of God spoke to us, and God would divinely move on our behalf and do things that only He could do. Sometimes, He gave us mercy; sometimes, He gave us grace. For example, God would give us the wisdom to know how to structure payments to repay the people we owed and to honor our obligations.

You see, we had obligations. We had a covenant with these people, and we had to pay them back. I looked my creditors in the face because my life is a testimony to my Father. I am a reflection of Him. I said to those we owed, "I want you to understand, I have full intentions of honoring my covenants with you. You will be paid. I don't know how God's going to bring this about, but if you'll just give me a chance, by the grace of God, He will direct me."

I told my friends, "God is the same yesterday, today, and

forevermore. God is going to direct me and show me what I need to do. Nothing has changed. I am the same man I was yesterday before this robbery, and God is the same God."

Although all my resources had been taken away, I looked at my suppliers and said, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord." (See Job 1:21.) I stood on the Word of God, knowing that if He restored Job of old, He would do the same for me, because He is no respecter of people.

Dr. T. L. Lowery: Do you believe that God allows testing to come in each person's life to prepare the individual for a higher place in God? Do you believe that every person who amounts to anything significant in the kingdom of God must go through the refiner's fire to be purged and tested to see what kind of metal he really possesses?>

Dr. Jeff O'Neal: No doubt, Dr. Lowery. Just as the Word of God says, "Everyone to whom much is given, has been committed, of him they will ask the more." (See Luke 12:48.) We don't understand the fullness and the context of that Scripture, but God is going to prepare us in advance for what lies ahead in our lives and our destiny, just as he did with Joseph, who was cast into the pit and the prison to prepare him for the palace.

"Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). He shall bring to pass what the Word of God says. God is working all things to the good for them that love the Lord and are called according to His purpose, as Romans 8:28 says. God is working everything and intricately networking it to bring about His purposes and His sovereign will, in order to spread the gospel around

the world and establish His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Dr. T. L. Lowery: What is happening at Micah's now? What is happening in your ministry? Can you see the hand of God in what He allowed you to experience during this time of spiritual conflict?

Dr. Jeff O'Neal: Dr. Lowery, the first thing I praise and thank God for in this struggle is for the salvation of souls. This is the first priority in all that we do. I have prayed for years that God would touch the hearts and lives of individuals who were in our inner circle and in our extended family. When I had tried to talk with them and share with them, the things I would say didn't seem to fall on open hearts and open minds. In this spiritual conflict, the Word was sown. God said His Word would not return void. The suffering that Okyon and I went through birthed their salvation. We have to be willing to suffer if we want to see the salvation of souls.

Another thing that we realized is that we have to be willing to wait on God as He is working in our lives and fulfilling a greater purpose and greater plan than we know. Sometimes, the answer doesn't come in the time frame we desire. But we have to understand that God's ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. (See Isaiah 55:9.) As God continued to move, I prayed, "O God, allow spiritual maturity and growth to come to certain individuals' lives."

As God was fulfilling His purpose in my life, He had to move me out of this situation and this assignment to go to another assignment, so these individuals could grow. At Micah's, I was literally overshadowing the growth of those around me. Another great joy that I have is noting the spiritual maturity I see in the people that I have

mentored and discipled. As I moved out, they began to have the room to move up.

And third, God took me into other areas of ministry because I walked in obedience and I was willing to humble myself. When He moved me from Micah's as the President and CEO of a large corporation, He sent me to a little Christian bookstore that was literally seven days from closing—dying—going out of business. The Lord said, "I want you to buy this store." He spoke to me clearly and confirmed it by His Word.

Little did I know that He was going to make me sit there and wait! I had to wait for forty-two months. I had to stay there and be obedient. It was humbling. Who would want to wait in a small, run-down Christian bookstore that was struggling to stay afloat? God said, "I want you to take this and resurrect it. I want you to stay here until I give you the next assignment."

It required a great amount of financial resources for us to do this, but we went in and resurrected this bookstore. We stayed there for that time period, and God surrounded me with His Word so that He could continue to allow me to grow.

Again, it goes back to the Word of God. In designing a building, the foundation ultimately dictates the building's size. The foundation we have in God's Word ultimately dictates where and what we're able to accomplish for the kingdom of God. We must continue to expand our foundation in the Word of God through study and prayer.

Thus, God put me in this bookstore so He could increase the foundation of what He wanted to do in my life. He gave me an outlet to speak—not just to one church, but to all the churches in that area. I

began to minister there in the bookstore. I was obedient for forty-two months, and then He released me. When the fullness of time had come and I had obeyed God, we sold the bookstore and I was released to go forward.

Little did I know what He was about to do! He opened the door for me to begin to minister around the world with Dr. T. L. Lowery. Just recently, God opened the door, without any effort on my part, to begin to minister to six million people weekly on Christian television in the Atlanta area.

I knew no one there; God sovereignly opened these doors. He gave me the divine appointments by sending Dr. Lowery to where I was. You don't have to do anything to make it happen. God has spoken it, and the Word of God says that all your days are ordained by Him. Before any of them existed, they were all written in the book. (See Psalm 139:16 NIV, NASB.)

God has a plan for your life. He has a destiny; He has a purpose. As you walk forward in faith and obedience, and humble yourself before God, and say, "God, not my will, but thine be done," God will set things in order in your life. He will set His plan in place, and it will begin to be fulfilled as you walk in obedience to the leading of the Spirit.

APPENDIX B

SPIRITUAL WARFARE & FINANCES:

DR. T. L. LOWERY INTERVIEWS DR. MICHAEL CHITWOOD

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

—Jeremiah 29:11

INTRODUCTION

D r. Michael Chitwood, CEO of Church Management & Tax Conferences (CMTC), is an expert in the area of finances and an outstanding Christian businessman. The following interview reveals the way the enemy works to attack us in the arena of our finances, and what we can do to counteract him.

Dr. T. L. Lowery: Dr. Chitwood, does spiritual warfare affect the area of finances in a Christian's life?

Dr. Michael Chitwood: Yes. Any area where there is a lack of faith (believing what God said) is a prime target for Satan. Finances is usually a common area of attack because most people are lacking in faith in that area. If Satan senses even a hint of doubt or insecurity, he will attack. He knows the power and the proof of biblical principles. If he can convince you to doubt, he can convince you to disobey. Once you disobey, you have cut off your supply line from the Lord. If we can believe God for our eternal security, why can't we believe Him to provide for our needs? Things that are more abstract in nature are easier to believe for because we have less control over them. Once we have any level of control or say so in a matter, it becomes subject to our pride and selfishness. Once our flesh has access to it, we want to take the control out of God's hands.

Dr. T. L. Lowery: What are some of the tactics the devil uses when he comes against believers in the arena of their finances?>

Dr. Michael Chitwood: Being self-centered (displaying selfishness) instead of being God-centered is a major tool of the enemy. For men

especially. Our ability to earn a living and be a provider is deeply rooted in our identity. This is a foundational issue for men that is linked to our masculinity and pride. If we can't provide an "acceptable" standard of living for our family, we feel like a failure. If we aren't meeting a standard, our nature is to find a way, in our own strength, to rise to that level.

Security is another area. Money has replaced God as our security. We have a sort of temporal, shallow feeling of security when we have money in our pockets. We feel as if we can handle any situation as long as we have money. If we don't have money, we feel we are in need. Once our faith and security in God is weak, Satan has an open door to play havoc with our minds.

Dr. T. L. Lowery: Why are finances such a critical area for Satan to use to come against believers?>

Dr. Michael Chitwood: Because we are so closely involved with our finances, we become attached to and possessive over the money we receive. We work to earn it, we discipline ourselves to save it, and we stretch it out to cover expenses.

Money has become our god, in many cases. If we allow Satan to talk us into letting anything become an idol, he has a stronghold in our lives. We become involved in the "love of money" that the Bible warns us about. It's not so much that we love money itself; it is that we love the feeling of security. We love the feeling of control, power, and pride that money produces. These feelings replace our need for and dependence on God, and give way to the controlling power of greed.

I believe our society's idolatry of money is a generational curse

that spreads farther than any curse of substance abuse or sexual addiction and perversion. The Lord said to the Israelites, *"'Do not forget the covenant I have made with you, and do not worship other gods. Rather, worship the LORD your God; it is he who will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies' They would not listen, however, but persisted in their former practices. Even while these people were worshiping the LORD, they were serving their idols. To this day their children and grandchildren continue to do as their fathers did"* (2 Kings 17:38-41 NIV). Previous generations had that mentality and have raised children and grandchildren to think in the same way.

I believe this curse has as strong, or a stronger, hold on the church than it does the rest of society. The church has adopted a mentality of lack and poverty. We have believed the lie of the enemy that we are less than those in the world, that we should live meager, deprived lives so that we can show our humility, and that we should not draw attention to ourselves by living in plenty.

Instead, we should believe that we are the head and not the tail, that we are supposed to be the lender and not the borrower (see Deuteronomy 28:12-13), and that, by standing out from the crowd, we draw attention to God because we are His representatives in this world. Who wants to follow a God who demands that you lose more than you gain?

Dr. T. L. Lowery: Can you relate a particular experience you or someone you know has had in this area?>

Dr. Michael Chitwood: A minister friend tells of a time when he had it all. He had both an active ministry and a great family. Then his wife

left him, taking their child and all their possessions with her. He found himself living in a one-room apartment with no furniture, all the while still preaching the gospel. He prayed continually for his financial circumstances, but nothing changed until the day he finally obeyed God's instructions.

One day, he received $100 for preaching a service. God directed him to give it away. He reluctantly gave it to the person the Lord directed him to. At his next meeting, someone gave him $1,000. He thought of all the important and necessary things he needed to do with the money, but the Lord directed him to give that away, too. He knew that if he gave it away, he would go without food and possibly lose his apartment. He approached the person the Lord had led him to and gave him $200.

After much conviction, he went back to that person and gave him the remaining money. Shortly afterward, he was blessed with a check for $10,000 and a car. Today, he has a prosperous, worldwide ministry, teaching others the financial principles of God and seeing people blessed immeasurably.

Dr. T. L. Lowery: Thank you, Dr. Chitwood. God has blessed you with spiritual wisdom and financial acumen; and you, in turn, bless the kingdom of God with your dedication to Him.

CONCLUSION

In His Word, God has declared, *"No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is from Me"* (Isaiah 54:17).

In His power and supernatural anointing, God speaks life into every dead situation. He gives promise and hope when all expectations have been shattered. I thank God that nothing is over until *He* says it is over! God is planning great things for you. He will open supernatural doors in your life today. He will break the chains that have bound you for years and will set you free!

It is my sincere prayer that, as you read this book, God will reach down His mighty hand and cancel every plot, plan, and scheme that the enemy has devised against you. I am praying for your household. I am praying for your health. I am praying for your marriage. I am praying for your job. I am praying for your children, your parents, and your siblings.

I am praying especially for your financial situation. Dr. Chitwood has given us insights we all can follow with great profit. God wants to bless your ministry. God wants to bless your decisions. He wants your debts to be paid and your mortgages to be canceled. He wants to give you your heart's desire.

I am praying for God's perfect will to be done in your life, in Jesus' name!

NOTES

Chapter Two

1 *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance,* #H1966.

2 *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible,* (*NASC*), #H1966, © 1981 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved.

3 *Strong's,* #G4567.

4 *NASC*, #G4567.

Chapter Three

1 *Strong's,* #G1228.

Chapter Four

1 See *Strong's*, #G1169.

Chapter Six

1 <http://dianedew.com/castle2.htm> (October 18, 2005)

2 See Larry Lea, *The Weapons of Your Warfare* (Orlando, FL: Strang Communications, 1989).

3 *Strong's,* #G4487.

4 *Strong's,* #G1746.

5 *Strong's,* #G2375.

6 *Strong's,* #G1209.

Chapter Eight

1 See *Strong's* and *NASC*, #G1162.

2 See *Strong's* and *NASC*, #G1793, #G5241.

3 See *Strong's*, #G1127.

4 *NASC*, #G1127.

5 For further reading on fasting, see Derek Prince, *Shaping History through Prayer and Fasting* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2002) and Arthur Wallis, *God's Chosen Fast* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1968).

6 Dennis Kinlaw, *Preaching in the Spirit* (Wilmore, Kentucky: Francis Asbury Press, 1985), 43-44.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

ABOUT MARY K. BAXTER

Mary Kathryn Baxter was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee. While she was still young, her mother taught her about Jesus Christ and His salvation.

Mary was born again at the age of nineteen. After serving the Lord for several years, she backslid for a season. However, the Spirit of the Lord would not release her, and she gave her life anew to Christ. She still serves Him faithfully.

In the mid-1960s, Mary moved with her family to Detroit, Michigan, where she lived for a time. She later moved to Belleville, Michigan, where she began to have visions from God.

In 1976, while she was still living in Belleville, Jesus appeared to her in human form, in dreams, in visions, and in revelations. Since that time, she has received many visitations from the Lord. During those visits, He has shown her the depths, degrees, levels, and torments of lost souls in hell. She has also received many visions of heaven, angels, and the end of time.

During one period of her life, Jesus appeared to her each night for forty nights. He revealed to her the horrors of hell and the glories of heaven, telling her that this message is for the whole world.

Ministers, leaders, and saints of the Lord speak very highly of Mary and her ministry. The movement of the Holy Spirit is emphasized in all her services, and many miracles have occurred in them. The gifts of the Holy Spirit with demonstrations of power are manifested in her meetings as the Spirit of God leads and empowers her. She loves the Lord with all her heart, mind, soul, and strength,

and she desires above all else to be a soul-winner for Jesus Christ.

Mary is truly a dedicated handmaiden of the Lord. Her calling is specifically in the area of dreams, visions, and revelations. She was ordained as a minister in 1983 at the Full Gospel Church of God in Taylor, Michigan. She now ministers with the National Church of God in Washington, D.C.

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ABOUT DR. T. L. LOWERY

Dr. T. L. Lowery was born in Eastman, Georgia, and was converted to Christ in 1943. He served as a pastor and evangelist until 1969, preaching in massive tent crusades nationwide—his tent seated ten thousand—and in numerous foreign countries. His evangelism ministry was marked by testimonies of thousands of converts, reports of frequent divine healings, and unnumbered people filled with the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Lowery served as pastor of two Church of God congregations, North Cleveland, Tennessee (1969-1974) and National, Washington, D.C. (1981-1996), where he led both churches in significant growth and major building programs. Part of his pastoral legacy was an emphasis on ministries to all strata of society. His pastoral leadership helped awaken the consciousness of the denomination to personal evangelism, lay ministry, and local church outreach. In both pastorates, he provided housing for the elderly. In Washington, he founded an outstanding private Christian school, a Bible school, and a seminary.

Dr. Lowery may be best known as a denominational leader, serving sixteen years on the Church of God Executive Committee and thirty-four years on the Executive Council. He has also acted interdenominationally on the boards of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), National Religious Broadcasters (NRB), and Pentecostal Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA).

He is the author or coauthor of two dozen books, most of which have been translated into numerous languages. He has also edited

three magazines and written many teaching booklets and articles. In addition to an earned Ph.D. degree, he has been recognized by two institutions with honorary doctorates.

Dr. Lowery's passion in personal ministry and in mentorship activities has been the active preservation of apostolic ministry in the Church of God and the wider Pentecostal-Charismatic community. He has numerous spiritual sons and daughters who have been saved, called into ministry, and mentored under his spiritual leadership.

Dr. Lowery and his wife, Mildred, have a son, Stephen Lanier Lowery, who is also engaged in the work of the Lord, and four grandchildren.

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